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"Didn't exaggerate, did I?" he went on (page 227).

A MODERN TRIO IN AN OLD TOWN

BY

KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

Author of "Real Stuff," "Natalie Page,"
"Barbara of Baltimore," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

BY

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TO

BONNIE BELL GUERNSEY

AND

JESSIE ELIZABETH GUERNSEY

WITH A VERY GREAT DEAL OF MY LOVE

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A MODERN TRIO IN AN OLD TOWN

CHAPTER ONE

APPREHENSIONS

AS I look back through my experience of eighteen years, I realize that many of my apprehensions have been foolish, because so many of the things that I dreaded turned out all right. Almost every one of the parties I thought would be stiff—and I am not very happy at the sort!—proved to be the kind where every one grew lively. I remember one that Elaine McDonald had, particularly, because I had said to mother, "I don't want to go. They'll all wear gloves and it will be *miserable!*" But I did go, and they had a Paul Jones that was so rough that they broke a chair and knocked over a table, and it was *fine!* While, on the other hand, there have been parties that I thought would be nice and informal, and we just went and sat in one place and talked, and at that sort I smile until my face feels as if it were covered with shellac, because I don't *feel* like

smiling at all. And this all shows—or it should, because I am trying to make it—that I never should take my apprehensions seriously. But—I seem to have to, and I always do, and so I felt as if I had real reason for misery, when Mrs. Hamilton, who had looked after me as I crossed the Atlantic upon the *Steamship Carpatia,* called me back into the stateroom and said, "By the way, child, I am not going to Florence, after all—"

Well, I shifted my weight from one foot to the other, which is what I often do while waiting.

"But," she went on, as she fussed with the little jars that contribute quite a lot toward her beauty, "I shall hunt up some one who is, and see that you are looked after."

"Thank you," I said, and then I went back to the foot I had originally been standing on.

"My friends, the Wiltons, want me to go to Mentone with them," she stated as she picked up a little brush she has for her eyebrows and began to use it, "and their plans sound rather jolly, and so I've taken them up. . . . I'm really sorry not to see you entirely settled, but there'll be some one on board who is going up, no doubt."

"I suppose so," I answered in a flat tone that I use while miserable. Then I wondered what in the world would happen if there was no one on board who was headed for Florence, because the only Italian I knew was, "La luna bella," which

is "The beautiful moon," and I didn't see what that would do on a railroad train, and especially since I was going to travel by day.

"How do you say Florence in Italian?" I asked, after I changed feet again.

"Firenze," Mrs. Hamilton responded, as she powdered the back of her hands, "and don't worry, we'll surely locate some one who will care for you—"

But that only half cheered me, because I had been but a day out of Boston when I realized that Mrs. Hamilton is like a lot of people who talk a good deal. She is a good *promiser,* and she promises so much that she can't do a third of all she intends to. Really the only thing she did do that she had forecast doing, was getting seasick, and she, herself, didn't entirely cause that. A couple of days of rough weather helped her.

However, to go back, I blamed her unjustly this time, for while I was idling around the deck after dinner, wishing that I had nothing on my mind to keep me from enjoying the salt tang in the air, and the pretty phosphorescent, silver lights that gleam in the water where the prow of the boat cuts it, she came toward me, and said she had found some one who would help me reach Florence safely.

"A Mr. Terrance Wake," she said, "probably you've never heard of him, but he is rather noted.

. . . Writes on art, all that sort of thing, and has a perfect love of a villa near Florence. . . . He says he'll be delighted to be of any service to you—"

"Well, if he'll just let me follow him, it'll be all right," I answered, and Mrs. Hamilton laughed.

"Funny child," she said, and then, "I must go in; I was dummy. . . . I'll present Mr. Wake in the morning—"

After that she vanished in one of the bright-lit doorways from which came the energetic voices of people who were fondly telling each other that they had played the wrong card, and again I was alone. I felt better and I could breathe with more ease. Before she came I had felt as if my lungs were a size too small for my breath. Being anxious always makes me feel that way. And I walked—around the deck I had learned so well—speaking to people as I passed them, exchanging plans, and promising to send post-cards.

I was awake when Mrs. Hamilton came down to go to bed, which was unusual for me, for insomnia is not one of my troubles, and I sat up in the berth to talk.

"What's Mr. Wake like?" I asked, as I leaned out and looked down.

"*Fascinating* man," she responded, "but fearfully indifferent!"

"Does he smoke?" I asked, for I had begun to get anxious again, and I had actually supposed up a bad awake-dream that had to do with his going off to smoke, and the train being broken up, and my being left in a strange country with nothing to help me but a remark about the moon.

"I don't know, Jane," Mrs. Hamilton answered, with an easy little laugh. Then she added the "Funny child!" she says at me so often, and I lay back and stared up at the ceiling again.

"You won't forget to introduce us, will you?" I asked, as she switched off the lights.

"Yo hum," she yawned, deeply. "No, dear, certainly *not!* Now go to sleep, for you'll have lots that's new to see to-morrow. . . . 'Night."

"Good night," I answered. . . . But I couldn't take her advice about sleep, and in the dark I lay wide eyed, and half unhappy, which is, I suppose, silly to confess. . . . But I had never met a strange country before; in fact, I had never been anywhere much before, and the whole experience was almost overpowering. And it was only after quite an hour of wakefulness that my eyes grew heavy and I began to dream.

When I woke up it was morning, a bright, sunny, warm morning, and there were voices outside which called in a way that was new to me; there were songs in the calls, even when they were

angry. And the ship was still, so I knew that we must be in the harbor at Genoa.

Because I was green—and still am and always will be!—I went down to the bathroom, and ran a tub full of water, and then decided not to bathe, for no one but a mud turtle could have bathed in that sort of water! It came right out of the harbor! And so I contented myself with the wash-bowl instead—the water from that was all right—and then went back to my stateroom; dressed, closed my steamer trunk and my bag, and hurried in to breakfast.

I found Mrs. Hamilton finishing hers, and she pointed out Mr. Wake to me. He sat at the Captain's table, and there was a beautiful woman devoting herself in the most unselfish way to talking to him, and he ate all the time she did it, and only nodded! I felt certain then that my day would be a silent one! However, that didn't worry me.

"*Marvelous* man," Mrs. Hamilton sort of breathed out in a way she does.

"He certainly can eat oat meal," I answered, because that was the only thing I noticed about him. Mrs. Hamilton laughed—she does a great deal—and turned to tell a young man with a funny little mustache what I had said, and he laughed. Then Mrs. Hamilton got up, and hurried off, and I finished my breakfast.

As I left the dining saloon, I heard her hail me, and I found that she had actually come back to see that I met Mr. Wake.

"Mr. Wake!" she called, as he came toward us, "here is my little charge—" Then she laughed, but he didn't laugh. He didn't even smile, he just bowed from the waistline in a manner that was very impressive, and yet chilling.

"And it is Miss Jones, whom I am to look out for?" he asked, in a sort of bored way.

"Jane," I answered. "I should think you could call me Jane, because you are so *much* older than I am—"

And then he did laugh.

"Bully," he said, "I will! And look here, Jane, I say, you won't talk Art to me, will you? Or quote my books?"

"I didn't know you wrote any until last night," I answered, seriously, and again he laughed. I laughed too, but just to be sociable, because I didn't see the joke.

"We'll have a fine day!" he said in the kindest and most enthusiastic manner, and I felt that we would too, but neither of us had any idea of how fine it would be, nor of all the many, many happy happenings it was to preface!

CHAPTER TWO

THE END OF ONE JOURNEY AND THE START OF ANOTHER

AFTER I had said good-by to a great many people, and walked down the shaking steps with canvas banisters that the sailors hang on the side of a ship, and stepped into a little tug as three Italians who wore blue uniforms screamed, "*Attento! Attento!*" I felt as if I were getting close to the end of my journey, and that the surprise pile must be getting low, for I couldn't imagine that things on land could keep on being so different. But they were, and after I landed, I felt as if the ship life, which had been a real change for me, had been only a mild preface.

The harbor was rough, and getting in was quite hard, which I liked, and a great many of the women in the tug screamed and held on to the nearest man, and the Italian sailors called shrilly, and it was all very nice.

"Afraid?" Mr. Wake asked of me. It was the first time he had spoken since he had thanked heaven that I had only one bag.

"No," I answered, "I like it. I kind of wish

it would go over—of course I wouldn't want any one hurt, but I would like to write home about it—"

"*Stars!*" said Mr. Wake.

"Which one would you rescue?" I asked as I looked around.

"None," he answered shortly.

Then I let conversation die, which is what I almost always have to do when I can't think of anything to say. I am not at all like my older sister Roberta, who is socially versed and can go right on talking, whether she has anything to talk about or not. Roberta is wonderfully clever, and talented and polished, and strangers can hardly believe we are sisters. But to get on, I didn't mind the silence because I had so much to see.

The town that cuddled against the hills on the shore was getting closer and closer, and it was so interesting to see palm trees and such stuff that one associates with greenhouses, around the Statue of Columbus in a public square down in front of the town.

"Like it?" Mr. Wake asked of me, after quite a long interval of silence.

I nodded.

"The Italian sun makes the shadows black, doesn't it?" I questioned, lazily, for the day and the new sights made me feel half sleepy, "and

the houses so white that you squint when you look at them," I went on. "Just the look of the sun makes you feel *warm*—"

Mr. Wake said I was right. "Personally," he said, "I think that that warm look makes a good many people think Italy a warm country. It isn't. Florence is penetrating during some of the winter months. Hope you have heavy enough clothes—"

"Oh, yes," I answered, "I have long underwear and everything—" and then I realized how Roberta would have felt about my confiding that, and grew silent. And after Mr. Wake said, "That's good," in a rather restrained way, he grew silent too.

Then suddenly we were bumping against a wharf, and the sailors were squawking as if the landing were the first one they had ever made, and ragged small boys with piercing brown eyes and dusky cheeks and black hair were crying, "Lady, postcard! Buy the *postcard!*" and beggars held out their hands and whined. And it seemed a pity to me that so gentle a climate and pretty a country had to welcome people that way.

However, before I was on land two or three minutes I had forgotten all about it and was completely absorbed by what Roberta would have termed "The country's entire charm."

There were occasional palm trees that rose in

piercing spikes between the roofs of dull red tile, and a blue sky so clear that it seemed thousands of miles from the earth and as if the blue overlaid silver; and little streets so narrow one felt sure the sun could never creep into them. But I can't do justice to these things, I can only tell, and roughly, of what sank into my mind and stayed there. And the things that dented my memory enough to stick in it, made their dents by sharp, *new* edges.

For instance: in Pennsylvania I never saw a little curly haired, brown-skinned baby who looked as if she ought to have wings, sitting on a curb—without as much as a safety pin on her—and laughing at the bright pomegranate which she tossed in the air or rolled in the dirt-filled gutter.

And I had never seen half clothed little boys turn handsprings in the street, and then sing out their begging song, which was, "Uno soldo, Signor! *Uno* soldo!" nor had I seen a town that lives in the street, and eats, quarrels, talks and sometimes even sleeps there.

We had to hurry through Genoa to the station, because we hadn't any too much time in which to catch the train for Florence, but we went on foot and followed our facchino (which is Italian for porter) who had our bags piled high in a wheelbarrow, and I was glad we walked and that we were in a hurry, for we took the short cuts

through the tiny back streets, and I think back streets are just like people's kitchens. You learn more of the people after you have looked at the dish cloth, and found out whether they use a nice, hemmed square, or use any old piece of worn material that happens to be around, than you can from studying their parlors where everything is all spick and span and stuck up.

I said so to Mr. Wake as we hurried along, but he didn't answer. He couldn't. Our going was uphill, and it seemed to tire him; he puffed dreadfully. I decided when I knew him better that I would teach him the Billy Taft stationary run, and a few of Mr. Camp's "Daily Dozen," but I didn't speak of it then, because I felt that the thought of further exercise might not be entirely welcome.

"Have to run for it," he panted, as we gained the platform, and we did, and we got in the train none too soon. I love getting trains that way, but Mr. Wake didn't seem to care for it so much, because after he had tossed the facchino some coins, and put our bags up on the shelf that is over the seats, he dropped down opposite me, took off his hat, fanned himself with it, and then wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Getting old," he said, but I shook my head, because my father is a doctor and I knew why he was out of breath.

"You're just a little overweight," I said, and I couldn't help looking at his stomach which stuck out. He saw me do it and he laughed and I liked the little wrinkles that stood out boldly for that moment, around his eyes.

"You know," he confided, "I've been trying to gain the courage to do something about it, but every one—up to this moment—has discouraged me! I'd get my mouth set for long walks and short rations, and then some one would say, 'Oh, stuff, you're just right—' "

"Did they *really?*" I questioned, because I could hardly believe it, and again he laughed.

"*Really, Jane!*" he answered.

"Well," I commented, "although you are not really fat, you're too fat for your height. And you puffed like the dickens after that run, and it wasn't *anything.*" And then I broke off with, "What's that?" for a horn of the prettiest, clear tone had tooted, and it made me wonder.

"Horn," said Mr. Wake, "they do that in the stations before the trains pull out; haven't any bells over here, you know. . . . Now watch this start—smooth as glass; no jolts! Government over *here* seems to know how to run railroads."

I smiled, because I thought that any government should be able to run the funny little trains that looked as if they ought to be running around

a Christmas tree, and as if they would fall off at every curve, to lie, feet up, buzzing until some one started them on again.

Mr. Wake saw my smile, and I was glad he did, because what it led him to say helped me lots later.

"Think they're funny?" he asked.

"They look as if they ought to be full of pine needles," I answered. "You know how the needles begin to drop all over the Christmas tree yard about the second of January?"

"Of course they look like that," he answered, "we got our patterns for toys, with many another thing, from this side of the pond. . . . My child, a great many Americans come over here, and derive real benefit; they see things that are beautiful and rare, but their gratitude is of a strange variety, for they evidence it only with bragging."

I felt flat. I said so.

"Pshaw, don't!" Mr. Wake begged. "I didn't mean you and I don't mean to be a preachy old codger, but I do think one sees more if one appreciates and doesn't *de*preciate. You know, as a matter of fact you wouldn't go into a neighbor's house and say, 'My house is better than your house, my bath tub is shinier; my doorbell is louder, my front porch is wider—' and lots of us —in various ways—do just that, for this is a neighbor's house."

I said a really humble "Thank you—" and Mr. Wake moved over to sit by me. He looked down and smiled in a very gentle way, and I began to love him.

"You are a very nice, sensible little girl," he said; "how old are you?"

I told him.

"And why are you off here alone at eighteen?" he asked.

"I am going to Florence to study piano with Mr. Michele Paggi," I responded.

"Well, *well!*" said Mr. Wake. And then he laughed. "I know him," he said after the laugh. "And my, my, what a fire-eater he is! Well—you seem to like adventure. . . . But whatever started you this way?"

"It really is a fairy story," I said, "and it is so romantic that I sometimes can't quite believe it, and I know I never shall be sure it isn't all a dream—"

"That *is* nice," Mr. Wake broke in, "and it's hard to believe that I sit by a young lady who instead of asking questions will weave me a tale. Good fairies in it?"

"Yes," I answered, "and a fairy godmother, who wears Paris hats, and always tilted just a little over one eye, and soft silk dresses, and gray furs that match her fluffy, wavy, light gray hair—"

"Ah," said Mr. Wake, "then she is the sort that I, myself, might fancy!"

"Oh, you *would!*" I asserted surely; and it seems very, very funny to recall that now!

CHAPTER THREE

LUNCH AND SOME MODERN HISTORY

I WENT into reverse for Mr. Wake, because he seemed interested in my own fairy story, but I didn't begin to tell it until after lunch.

Buying our lunches was the most interesting kind of a business transaction, and unpacking them was interesting too.

"At the next station," Mr. Wake said, "I am going to get two mighty good lunches that come packed in little baskets, and there will be a little wicker-covered bottle, full of wine, that you can use for hair tonic or scent after it's empty—"

And then the train slowed and he leaned far out of the opened window that was in the door of our compartment.

The station where we found ourselves after we had come to a gentle stop was much smaller than the one at Genoa, but it had the same foreign flavor, and a highly charged feeling of imperfectly suppressed excitement and happiness. I can't quite explain about this; it rises, perhaps, from the clear, dazzling sunlight, the masquerade-ball look that is lent by gay uniforms, and the women who carry trays that are piled high with small bouquets. But anyway it is there. And

this gaiety was strange to me. Of course at our stations there are always some people who scream such things as, *"Let us know when you get to Aggie's!"* or, *"Don't forget to write!"* at each other, through two panes of thick glass, but they don't seem entirely happy and I feel that the majority are entirely sober about traveling, and when I mentioned my feeling to Mr. Wake, he said they had a right to be.

Mr. Wake called out something in Italian, and his cry mingled with the shrilly voiced wants of the many Italians who leaned from the other windows of the train, and a white aproned man who trundled a truck that was piled high with little baskets caught the coins that were flung to him, and handed lunches into the train, and said his "Grazies" and made his bows.

And then he reached us, and Mr. Wake bought two baskets for two lire each, and we sat down and unpacked them. There were bologna sandwiches and ripe olives—which I then didn't care for—and a slab of Italian cheese which I couldn't name, a very good hard roll, figs and grapes, very fresh and delicious, and then there was the little gourd-shaped bottle with wicker around its feet, and a paper napkin. It seemed very reasonable to me for a few cents, because it was all I needed, and I always need quite a bit.

"I don't know whether I'd better drink this—"

I said, about the wine. "It might make me light-headed—"

"Nonsense," said Mr. Wake, "it's about as likely to as lemonade. . . . The Italians drink it like water, and you never see one drunk—probably won't unless some fool starts a prohibition movement."

Then the train made its slippery, oiled start, and I spoke only once again, and then I was silent for some time. "Do they sell cushions, too?" I asked. I had seen a whole truck piled high with them, and had seen some of them being passed into the windows of the train, and I was naturally curious about everything.

"Rent them," Mr. Wake answered. "The people leave them in the train, and they are rented again on the trip back." That seemed very strange to me, too, coming, as I do, from a race that takes everything that isn't nailed down, while traveling.

Then I really ate, and I was glad to have the quiet lull in which to look at the things we passed. Everything fascinated me, but nothing seemed real. I expected all the time to hear the click of the nickel as it drops into one of those boxes holding candy that are clamped to the back of the seats in our opera house. The country looked like a drop curtain, or the kind of a scene that brings on a Tyrolean chorus. There was a lot of

pink and white and bright, bright green and salmon colored houses, with blue shutters; and little shrines set high upon their walls, under the wide-hanging, gleaming roofs of tiles. . . . And there were oxen on the smooth white roads we passed, drawing queer, lumbering looking carts with huge wheels that creaked each time they completed their uneven circles. . . . I had so many things to interest me that I was too busy. It made me think of the time that Daddy took the twins (my youngest sisters) to the circus, and they cried because they couldn't look at all the rings at once. I felt that way, and so surprised over everything. I enjoyed my lunch, but I chewed dully and without my usual enthusiasm. That was because I was looking so hard at the same time. Mr. Wake watched me, and his eyes twinkled. I think he liked the way I felt. Anyway, as I brushed the crumbs from my lap and put the little basket in which the lunch had come up by my bag, Mr. Wake said, "You know, I have a firm conviction that you are going to enjoy Florence."

"I'd be an idiot not to, wouldn't I?" I asked.

"Surely, but the world is full of idiots. Mr. Carlyle once said, 'London has a population of three million people, most of whom are fools'—but tell me your story. You come from Pennsylvania?"

"Yes," I answered, "from a little town that

has the smell of oil in the air, and that is surrounded by hills that have oil wells on them. It's a fine town. You'd *like* it."

"No doubt," agreed Mr. Wake, and again he smiled at me.

"And," I confided, "I'd never even been to Buffalo, which is our closest city, so you can imagine what all this does to me—"

"And who waved the wand?" he asked.

"Miss Sheila Parrish," I answered.

"Miss—" he stopped, then began again, "Miss —*who?*" he asked.

"Miss Sheila Parrish," I repeated. "It's a pretty name, isn't it?"

Mr. Wake didn't answer immediately, and then he said, "It *is* a pretty name; I'm thinking it holds a touch of old Ireland and a deal of romance."

"She hasn't many friends," I said, "she says she is fond of solitude—"

Mr. Wake, who was looking down at a strange ring he wore—which I soon learned was a scarab, —twisted it as he said, "Well, now you have introduced the fairy who holds the wand, tell me, please, how did she wave it?" And I told him.

It had begun early in May on a rainy day when I had spilled fudge right in the middle of the front breadth of my one good dress. I felt dreadfully about it, because Mother is always asking

me to wear an apron, and she works so hard to keep us looking nice that the idea of making her more work made *me* miserable. But there the fudge was, spreading over the floor, with the treacherous pan handle, that had made me knock it off, looking as mild and blameless as the twins after they have been eating pink and yellow candy bananas (these are forbidden) and there I stood looking down miserably at the front of my skirt and wondering what to do.

Well, I remember I murmured, "I might as well scrape it up, and get out of this—" and so I got a palette knife and scraped the top layer of fudge off the floor for the twins—who don't care at all what has happened to any fudge as long as it happens to come to them—and then I scraped my dress, and sponged it a little, and then—miserable and feeling weighted—went up to the third floor where I sleep in the same room with Roberta, and got into my old, faded pink lawn.

I hated that lawn dress, and it helped me to wear it while I waited for Mother who was down town buying Ferris waists and garter elastic and bone buttons and dish towel material and all those things mothers buy at least once a month, and of course I needed to see mother—as every one of us always needs her when we have been into mischief!

I knew she would say, "Never mind, honey,

we'll fix it in no time! I have more goods and I'll slip in a new front breadth before you can say 'Jack Robinson!' " And I knew that I would feel humble and mean because of her being so nice, but cleared up too, and that I would slide up to her, and lay my face against her shoulder, and say, "Oh, *Mother,*" in a tight way, because thinking of how wonderful she is, and how much too good for us, always makes me want to cry, and I would rather die than cry.

The only time when I ever did cry without shame was when my favorite pitcher was expelled, and most unjustly, from *The Oil City League.*

However, to get on, I went down stairs, and watered the plants and dusted and did all those things I never do while feeling well mentally, and then I sat down and played the piano.

I didn't play anything that echoed my mood but I played a dancing, gay, bright thing. I belive most people save the sad ones for those moments when they *want* to feel sentimental, or are not *afraid* of being sad.

Anyway I played this thing which sounded as if gipsies might dance to it in the heart of a summer day, and I played it, I believe, fairly well.

After I finished it I sat idle, my hands on the piano keys, feeling even more depressed than before, and it was into this moment of dreariness that the fairy godmother stepped.

Perhaps I heard a little noise, and perhaps I only felt eyes on me, but in any event, I turned—something made me turn—and then I said, "Why, Miss Sheila!" for although I had never seen the pretty woman who stood in the doorway, I had often—very often—seen the picture of the girl she had been, and the years had not changed her much.

She came toward me as I got up, and she held out both hands, and I saw that she had felt tears, for her long lashes were wet, and made into little points.

"Bless you, darling child!" she said, as she kissed me, "how did you know?" and I said, "Mother has a picture of you, and of course we've always talked of you, for Mother loved you so much; she said you were so *kind* to her!"

"Kind to her?" she echoed, "dear soul, think of all that she did for me—"

And then her eyes brimmed again, and Mother spoke quickly of how they had met, because I think she felt that it was too hard for Miss Sheila to remember the time when Mother, then a trained nurse, had cared for Miss Sheila's younger brother who died.

"Right by the First National," Mother said, "and there I was, coming out of Mr. Duffy's with a pound of liver, and I looked up and saw dear Miss Sheila!"

"And I've tried to find you everywhere, Margaret," said Miss Sheila to Mother, "but that trip—I traveled, you know, after we parted, and I lost hold of threads for a time, and then when I came back I couldn't locate you. I suppose you married the young interne in the Pennsylvania Hospital, during that interval?"

Mother laughed, flushed and nodded.

"He used to write her letters that weighed seven to eight pounds, *every day,*" said Miss Sheila to me, as she shook her pretty head disapprovingly, "I assure you the poor postman grew quite stooped; I hope, Jane, that no young interne writes to *you?*"

And I told her that none did, and that I wouldn't let any, because I wanted a husband whom I would know by sight, anyway, and one that didn't smell of ether.

And then I put my hand on the piano—"It's this with me," I said shyly, because I do feel shy about my playing. It makes me feel lumpy in my throat from the way I love it, and that embarrasses me.

"I don't wonder," said Miss Sheila as she looked at me searchingly, "I heard you . . . Jane—"

And she didn't wave her wand, but I saw the flicker of its silver magic in the air —

"Jane," she continued, "I have a hobby, and

it is helping girls to find work that they like, and after finding it, helping them to go on with it. . . . This, because I, myself, have been without work, and suffered from it. . . . You can play, my child, and your mother is going to give me the great pleasure of letting me help you play better. . . . You are, Margaret? *My dear, remember the old days, and all that you did for me!* . . . Jane," (she turned back to me) "in Florence there is rather a marvelous teacher named Michele Paggi, and in October you shall go to him!"

That was the story.

I told it to Mr. Terrance Wake as if he could see our house, and knew the people in it, including Miss Sheila, who abandoned the party with whom she was motoring and came to stay with us for a time.

And as I ended it, on that Italian train that was taking me nearer and nearer to Florence, I looked up to see that Mr. Wake was still twisting a scarab ring and looking down at it.

"So you see," I said, "why I am here, and why I love Miss Sheila—"

"Yes," he said, and he raised his head to smile at me in a strange way. "Yes—I see—" and then he looked away from me and down again at his scarab ring.

CHAPTER FOUR

FLORENCE AND THE NEW HOME

WHEN we reached Florence, which was well along in the afternoon, Mr. Wake went with me to the Pension Dante, which is on the Piazza Indipendenza, not far from the station, and is the place where Miss Sheila had arranged to have me stay.

Again a facchino took our baggage and piled it all up, trunks and bags together, in a wheelbarrow, and then started ahead of us, singing.

"Don't you live in the country?" I asked of Mr. Wake, for I had understood from Mrs. Hamilton that he did.

"Yes, out the Fiesole way," he answered; "my goods go to the Piazza del Duomo where I take a tram."

"What's a duomo?" I asked, because I imagined it was some kind of an officer in a high, bearskin cap. It seemed to me that it sounded like that. But it wasn't, it was something quite different.

"It's the greatest church in an Italian city," Mr. Wake answered, "and I think you will probably be able to see the dome of this one from your

window. It is one of the largest domes in Italy; it was the model for St. Peter's in Rome, and it was alike the despair of Michael Angelo, and the pride of its maker, Brunelleschi."

I said, "Oh," because at that time such facts seemed dry to me, and dulled by dust. I had not learned how much romance may be unearthed by a puff of breath from some one who knows, as does Mr. Wake, how to blow aside the years.

"About a month," he said, "and you'll like it, and you'll be hunting for old facts." And then he smiled at me in a way that told me he had understood my feeling.

After that our facchino paused and dumped my baggage out of his wheelbarrow and rang a bell.

"You've evidently reached home," Mr. Wake hazarded, "and a mighty nice place it is too, isn't it, with this square before you? Probably puff up a million stairs now, and then you'll tell me I have too much tummy, won't you?"

"No," I answered, "I did tell you that."

He laughed, and we followed the facchino who had put my trunk on his shoulders, and started before us, up three flights to the Pension Dante.

"Look here," said Mr. Wake as we paused on the first landing, "suppose you take me in training? You walk?"

"I have to," I answered. "Father made me

promise to walk at least five miles every day—"

"Well, that ought to help me," Mr. Wake commented; "suppose I go, too, and show you the town?"

I said I'd like it.

"I can take you to some spots most tourists miss," he promised, as we again started on and up.

"That'll be nice," I said, but I never dreamed then how very nice it would be, nor of how much I was to enjoy those trips he planned, in spite of the fact that I learned a good deal in the process. "And I thank you," I ended, and he said I was most welcome.

Then the door at the head of the third flight opened, and I saw a pretty, plump little Italian woman whose hair rippled like the waves that follow in the immediate wake of a steamboat, and when she held out both of her hands to me, and said, "Buona sera, Signorina, well-*come!*" I felt very much at home, and I loved her right away.

"Are you Miss Rotelli?" I asked.

"Yes, Mees Rotelli," she answered as she nodded like everything, and I introduced Mr. Wake, and he left me after a promise of looking around to see how I was in a day or so, and then I followed Miss Rotelli—I soon called her Miss Julianna—in,

And *in*—

Well, I think that everybody *should* travel. As Mr. Hemmingway, whom I met at dinner, says, it is *educational.* One has an idea, or at least I did, that houses all over the world are about the same. I expected little differences, but I didn't expect stone floors, or Cupids painted on walls, or ceilings that took a field glass to see, or to see a plaster-of-Paris Madonna on the wall with a tall wrought-iron candlestick on the floor before it. . . . And I hadn't expected to see a box full of sawdust with a broom in it, or that they had to clean house differently in Florence. . . . I didn't know that there was so little water that they had to dampen sawdust and brush it around the rooms instead of mopping them up as we do. There are many, many differences, but those things, and Beata, struck into me at first.

Beata, who had a rose in her hair, and whom I soon found was the cook and waitress, was sitting in the long corridor into which I had stepped.

She rose as I came in and bobbed from the knees, as Elaine McDonald, who is the only girl in our town who ever went to boarding school, did the first year after she came home.

"She ees Beata," said Miss Rotelli, and Beata spoke. "She say *well-come,*" explained Miss Rotelli.

"Tell her thank you, if you please," I said. And then I heard, "Niente, Signorina Ameri-

cana!" from Beata, who again sat down and went on knitting a bright red tie.

"She make for her sweetheart," said Miss Rotelli, and I didn't feel very far from home at *that* moment. . . . Roberta makes dozens of ties and always falters over presenting them, and says that *perhaps,* after she's made a *few* more, she can do better—which mother doesn't think very nice, because it makes every poor silly she gives them to think he's the first one to have a tie knit for him by Roberta. But Roberta is like that! It's all unfair that she should be popular, but—she is!

However, to get on, I followed Miss Julianna well down a corridor, which ran straight ahead as one entered the door from the outside hall, and was so long that it narrowed in the distance almost like a railroad track, and toward the end of this Miss Julianna opened a door on the left, and said, "Your room." She said everything in a clipped way that was most interesting and, to me, attractive.

And I went in.

I felt lots of interest about that room, of course, because I imagined that I would spend a great deal of time in it for the next six months at least. I looked around carefully, and then I said, "It's very pretty," although I really didn't think it was but I wouldn't for the world have disappointed

Miss Julianna, who looked on and waited, I thought, a little anxiously.

"Grazie, Signorina," she said, which means, "Thank you, Miss," and after that she said, all in a level, and very fast, "Down-the-hall-bath-room-with-water-which-runs-and-real-tub - dinner-at-seven-good-by—" and after that she nodded her head and backed out.

Then I took an inventory which resulted in the discovery that I was in a room that was as big as our Elks' ball room at home; a room which was punctuated at long intervals by one bed, covered with a mustard colored bed-spread, a bureau which had a mirror that belonged in the funny mirror place in the County Fair, two chairs that were built for people with stiff corsets, one chair that was designed for an aviator, (it went over backward if you weren't familiar with its management) a wash stand with some stuff on it that Leslie—about Leslie later—called "Medieval hardware," a table with a bright red cover, a black marble mantel and a footstool which I soon learned it was wise to use if you didn't want your feet to grow numb from cold.

In the exact center of the room was a little rug that looked about as big as a postage stamp on a cabinet photograph case; and across from the door was the room's real attraction which I was yet to explore, and that was the window.

I walked over to it slowly; and there, I leaned out, and after I had leaned out—I don't know how long—I came back and hunted in my suitcase for the writing case that Elaine McDonald had got in New York and given me for a going-away present. And, after I had addressed an envelope to Mother, and put on "Jackson Ridge, Pennsylvania, Stati Uniti d'America," which Miss Sheila had told me to do; and after I had told about my health and asked about theirs, and said I was safe, and told of Mr. Wake who had helped me, when Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Sheila's acquaintance, had changed her plan, I described *the back yard.*

"I have just looked out of my window," I wrote, "and down into a little court that looks as if it belongs to another age and were sleeping in this. It is a court upon which all the houses that box this square, back. It has a fountain in it that has a stone cupid in its center; there must be a mile and a half of tiny winding paths; and there is heavy leaved foliage like none I have ever seen. Some of the trees quite cover the paths, and others of a more lacy variety give one a glimpse of the red tiles that divide the winding yellow ways from the green.

"Across the way is a tan stucco house with green shutters; its next door neighbor is salmon pink and has flower boxes on its window sills. The windows are—most of them—set in at different

heights. It does not look neat, but it is pretty; I think even prettier than the way we do it at home.

"The sun is so bright that when it rests on anything white, it blinds you. And all the shadows are black. The roofs are of red tile, and slope gently. There are some poplar trees" (I found later they were cypress trees; the shape misled me) "swaying over the top of a low roof down the block. When I was last at the window a little shopkeeper who wore a big apron sat in his back door singing, while he polished brass, and his voice is nearly as good as Mr. Kinsolving's—"

(Mr. Kinsolving is our church tenor, and he gets two dollars for singing at each service, which shows how *fine* he is; but I honestly thought that the shopkeeper sung better, but of course I wasn't going to write that home for one of the twins to blurt out when they shouldn't!)

"Across the court," I went on, "is a studio—"

(It seems strange to me now—my writing about that studio in my first letter home!)

"And I can see the artist painting," my pen scratched on. "He has on a long white aprony looking thing, and I can see his arm move before his canvas which is dark. I think I shall like watching him and thinking that there is some one else in this block who is trying hard to get on, as I shall soon!

"I wish you could see everything I can, dear people, and especially the court. Marguerite Clarke, as she was in *Prunella,* ought to be dancing in the court with her Pierrot following; the court looks like that, and as if it would be full of ghosts who dance the minuet on moonlight nights—"

I stopped, reread what I had written, and wondered whether I should send it, because Roberta, who is much more practical, sometimes thinks the things I fancy, silly. But then I caught the Mrs. Frank Jones on the envelope and I knew that it could go.

For Mother always understood my funny, half hidden, soft moods as well as my love of baseball and outdoor things, and I knew that she would like what I had written, even though it would seem foolish to all the rest. So I kissed the page, and put a little cross where I had kissed it, and I wrote, "That's for you, Mother dear—" and then I got up and brushed my hair really hard, and hurried around at dressing, the way you do when you have felt almost homesick and are just a little afraid that the whole feeling may creep over you.

An hour or so later I heard a tinkling bell, and a soft, musically rising voice which sung out, "È pronto!" which I found later means "Is ready," in Italian, and that "Is ready" in Italian means dinner. But I understood that night not from "È

pronto,'' but from the fact that, after I opened my door and looked into the hall, I saw three other doors open and very queer looking people come out of them, and go toddling down the hall.

The first one was fat, and wore the kind of basque mother was photographed in when she was very young. Her skirt was a purplish serge that had once been blue.

''Well, Miss Bannister!'' she called to a thin old lady who came out of the door almost opposite mine. Miss Bannister's hair was not applied quite as it should have been; it seems mean to mention it, but she never gave you a chance to forget it! Leslie thought she tied it on the gas jet, then ran under it, and clipped the cord as she ran, and let it stay just where it dropped, and it did look that way!

''Hello,'' answered this old lady, in a high squeaky voice. ''Has she come?''

''My eye, yes!'' answered the one in the basque, whose name was Miss Meek, ''and a jolly number of boxes too. I say we'll have a beastly lot of brag!''

That made me mad, and I decided that they wouldn't have any from *me.* Then they saw me and grew silent, and at the moment another door opened, and a tall, thin man who walked as if he had casters under him, came sliding out.

''Ahem,'' he said, ''*ahem!* And how is every

one to-night? A charming day,'' he went on without waiting for answer, ''a charming day! How well I remember a day such as this in the fall of 1902—'' (he paused, and when he continued, spoke very slowly) ''now *was* it in 1902, *or* 1903? How can I fasten it?'' (He snapped his fingers and I'm sure he frowned, although I was walking back of him and couldn't see.) ''But just a moment, I *can* locate the year if I reason the thing *through,* and I make this bold assertion because, if I recall correctly, it was in the fall of 1902 that I was in England, while the day to which I refer was beneath Italy's azure skies, which clearly reveals, and without possible doubt, that it was in 1903, since—''

''Oh, lud!'' broke in the fat one who wore the purplish blue skirt and the basque, and was Miss Meek. ''Oh, lud!'' which I found later was her way of saying, ''Oh, Lord!''

And then we turned into the dining room—I had followed the crowd at a respectful distance—and Miss Julianna stepped forward, to say, ''La Signorina Jones, Americana!'' and then she turned and said, ''Mees Meek, Mees Banneester, Meester Hemmingway; you must be *friend!*''

And I said that I hoped they would let me be. And then, a little flushed because I was not used to meeting so many people at once, I wiggled into my chair, and Beata came in with the soup.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEW FRIENDS, A NEW DAY, AND NEW PLANS

I LOOKED at the bunch of paper roses that stood in the center of the table as I ate my soup, because I felt all the rest looking at me and it made me uncomfortable; and I suppose I would have looked at them, or down at my plate, all through the meal, if Miss Bannister hadn't barked a question out at me.

"Where do you come from?" she asked, with an emphasis and a rise in her sentence that was as new to me as the Italian I was hearing.

"Pennsylvania," I answered.

"Quite a village, I suppose?" she questioned.

I tried to explain, but right in the middle of my explanation she said: "One of my deaf days, but no matter, I don't care in the least. I only asked to be polite, don't you know—"

Which left me feeling as you do when you run for a car, but do nothing more than reach the spot where it *was*. I ate soup quite hard for several minutes.

Then Mr. Hemmingway, who had traveled quite a lot—I learned it soon!—helped me out by screaming information about the States across

the table to Miss Bannister, who clattered her spoon and kept saying, "No matter, no matter!" all the time he talked. I felt just exactly as if I were in the middle of a funny dream, and one that wasn't especially nice, and I honestly even half wondered whether I wouldn't wake up to tell Mother about it, and have her say, "Now *what* did you eat before you went to bed?"

But I didn't wake up and the dinner went on; Beata took away our soup plates, and then brought in big plates of spaghetti, cheese was passed and sprinkled over this, and I found it good, but difficult to eat, because it was in long pieces. Several on my plate I know would have gone around our hose reel *dozens* of times! Anyway, as I struggled with this and tried to cut it, Mr. Hemmingway began, and I began to understand *him.*

"I am familiar with the States," he asserted, "although my travels in the States have not been extensive. I spent a winter in Canada while a comparatively young man; it was, if I recall correctly, the winter of 1882. *Or was it* '83? Now I *should* know. Ah, I have it! It was '83, and my certainty of this pertinent fact comes from the recollection that in '82 I was in England, and I know this, because the year prior to that, which, if you will reckon, was '81, I was detained in a village in South Wales, by a sharp attack of fever which was thought to have been introduced by

the importation of French labor upon the occasion of—"

And so on. He never got there, but I did feel sorry for him, so I listened just as hard as I could, which is less trying where you can eat than at other places. He was having a splendid time, when Miss Meek cut in to question me.

"Student?" she boomed out, and she pronounced it, "Stew-dant."

I felt pleased, and I wanted to answer nicely, but I had at least six inches of spaghetti in my mouth—I hadn't meant to take so much but it kept trailing up, and I had to lap it in—and so I had to nod. I should have waited a minute before I let that pleased feeling get on top, because she shoved it right over a cliff by her next remark, which was, *"Oh, my eye!"* and she followed that with a prodigious groan. It wasn't very flattering.

"But in a student pension," began Mr. Hemmingway, "where the rates are lowered for others by the fact that practising makes the house—in some ways—less attractive, one must accept the handicap with grace. How well I remember in Vienna, when I, then quite a boy—let me see, *what was the year?*"

"No matter!" barked Miss Bannister, and then Miss Meek added something, after another groan, that interested me considerably.

"And two more coming!" she stated.

"*Are* there?" I asked quickly.

"I do not lie," she answered frigidly, and I stammered out something about not having meant that she did, but that I was interested.

"Mees Leslie Parrish," said Miss Julianna, who came in at the moment, after Beata who carried a big platter upon which were rounds of meat all wrapped in overcoats of cabbage leaves in which they had been baked, "and Mees Viola Harris-Clarke—"

I was surprised, and I couldn't quite believe it, because Leslie Parrish was Miss Sheila's niece, and I couldn't see quite why she was coming to study.

Miss Sheila told me a good deal about Leslie while she visited us. I remember one day, while I sat on the guest room bed and helped Miss Sheila run two-toned ribbon—wonderfully lovely ribbon which was faint lavender on one side and pale peach pink on the other—into her beautiful under-things, that she, Miss Sheila, said her own niece *would* have played well if she had ever learned to work. And I remember just how she looked as she tossed a chemise to a chair and said, "But unhappily, the child has been frightfully, and wrongly indulged—"

It made me wonder a lot!

I knew that Leslie Parrish's father had lots of money, all the Parrish family are wealthy, and I

knew that she spent her time going to parties and making visits, and entertaining, for Miss Sheila had told me that too. So I thought Miss Julianna must be mistaken, because, for Leslie, the Pension Dante would be very simple.

"When did you hear this?" I asked.

"A week, ten days past," she answered, "in the cable. You did not know?"

"No," I answered, "I didn't."

"I suppose you did. Miss Parrish also write for you—"

"When are they to arrive?" asked Miss Meek.

"To-morrow, or day after," Miss Julianna answered, as Beata took away the plates that had had the meat on them and substituted some plates on which were lettuce and red cheese.

After this came a pastry, and that made Miss Bannister say, "Tart again!" in a high, querulous voice.

"Bally things!" said Miss Meek, who, I soon found, loved to be thought a sport and used lots of English slang, I think, because she had been a governess and still taught English to a few Italians, and was afraid of being considered school-teachery or prim.

They both ate their tarts just as if they enjoyed them, while Mr. Hemmingway began to tell about how the first tart was made in England, and was side tracked by the reason that had made the man

who had told it to him, *tell* it to him. I began to see that he was really ever so funny, and to feel like smiling each time he said, "Now let me see, it was raining that day *if* I recall correctly, or was it the day before that day when it rained so heavily? It seems to me it was *that* day, because I remember I had some new galoshes which I had gotten in East London at one of the curb stalls, and I recall the getting them, because—"

And on and on! His mind was full of little paths that led him away from the main road, which even a clever person could only occasionally glimpse through the haze Mr. Hemmingway made by details.

After we had finished the "tart," Miss Meek pushed back her chair, and boomed out "Draughts?" to which Miss Bannister, who still seemed querulous, answered, "If you like—"

And they got out a checker board from behind a bookcase that was by a window; Beata cleared one corner of the table, and they began. Mr. Hemmingway stood looking on, rocking back and forth, first on his heels and then on his toes, and as he did this he tried, I think, to tell of a game of checkers he had seen played between experts somewhere in Brazil, but of course I couldn't really tell.

"When I was a youngster—" he began, "now *was* I twenty-three or was I twenty-four? It

seems to me I was twenty-four, because the year before I had typhus, and I am certain that that happened in my twenty-third year, and directly after my convalescence I took passage for South America which would make me twenty-four at that time, since my birthday is in November, (*the year's saddest month*) and having gone directly after that, I must, therefore, have passed my twenty-fourth birthday—"

"Ho hum—" grunted out Miss Meek.

"However, no matter," said Mr. Hemmingway quickly, "What I was about to entertain with is the history of my witnessing a match of draughts played between experts in San Paola. . . . And how keenly I remember it! The day was fine—"

"Ho hum!" groaned Miss Meek.

"What's he saying?" asked Miss Bannister.

"Not a bally thing! getting ready, don't you know!" Miss Meek shouted in answer, and I did feel sorry for him, but my sympathy wasn't needed, for Miss Meek's attitude, I soon learned, made no impression.

"I think," I put in, "I must go to my room; I am so sorry, for I would love to hear about the match, but I must finish a letter to my family—"

Which wasn't true, but didn't know how to get off without some excuse!

I went to bed early, but again I didn't sleep early, and I think it was fully a half hour before

my eyelids closed. A cat down in the court had made all the screeching, whining, sizzling, hissing noises one cat can make, and big mosquitos had hummed around to disturb me, too. But at last I burrowed under the covers, and then I forgot, and when I woke, the sun was spread out across the square tiled floor in a wide, blazing streak. And the sky looked flat, as if some giant had stretched gleaming blue satin all over space; there wasn't a cloud, nor a feeling of movement, outside my window, but only the brightness of the keen, strong sun, and that deep, thick blue. . . . I lay looking out until some one tapped, and after my answer I heard Beata's singing voice, saying: "Buon giorno, Signorina! Acqua calda!"

And I got up to take in a tall, slender necked brass pitcher which was filled with water that sent up a cloud of steam.

CHAPTER SIX

MISS PARRISH AND MISS HARRIS-CLARKE

AFTER I had breakfast, I went back to my room, and tried to forget that I was almost hungrier than I had been before, and I did this by looking out into the court, which I found had a morning flavor that differed from its mood of the afternoon. For instance the little man, instead of slowly polishing brass and stopping his polishing now and again as he raised his head and lingered on a particularly nice note in his singing, swept energetically around the back door of his shop with a broom that looked as if it belonged in a picture of some witch. And as he swept he chattered shrilly at a boy who was riveting something on a bench near the door.

And there were children chasing each other around the paths, and my artist wasn't at work. . . . I realize now—Leslie has taught me many things—that it wasn't nice to spy on him, but at that time he seemed only part of a play I was witnessing, and when I saw what he was doing, I hadn't the slightest consciousness about leaning right out of my window and looking across at his.

He was cooking his breakfast, in front of an

open window that was next to the big studio window which so lit the room that one could see in pretty well, and I did wonder what he was eating! I had the greatest interest in watching him dump it out of the frying-pan on his plate, and when he leaned out of his window, to wave his frying-pan, and call, "Gino, buon giorno!" at the little man with the broom, and he, in turn, waved his broom as he answered, I felt as if the play was really started.

Then I watched him eat and of course that wasn't nice but, as Leslie said, later, I "lack even a rudimentary knowledge of social graces," (and I wanted to punch her for saying so) and so I could frankly enjoy a lot of things a really polished person would have to pretend they weren't watching.

After my artist had had his breakfast he threw a piece of something that was left at a cat, and said—so loudly that it floated across the court to me—"Scat, you green-eyed instrument of Satan!" which led me to think that he had heard the cat concert, too.

"American," I said half aloud, for two things had told me so; one was his voice, and the other was his dandy throw, for it was a peach. It took the cat right on the nose. It must have been soft, for, after the cat had jumped it came crawling back to the bouquet that had been hurled at

it and sniffed at it as cats do, and then it turned around and sat down and washed its ears and whiskers. That made me like him, for I like cats, and a great many men don't hunt things that are exactly *soft* to throw at cats who sing all night!

Then he went to work—I saw him slip into his big, long apron, and take his brushes out of a mason jar in which they were standing—and I left the window and opened my steamer trunk, which I had only unlocked the night before, and did my unpacking.

At about ten Beata came in, pointed at my made up bed, and said, "No, *no,* Signorina!" by which I suppose she meant she would do it, and then she said, "Oh!" in a way that told me she had suddenly remembered something, and fumbled in her pocket.

There was a letter in it for me from Miss Sheila, and I opened it with a great deal of interest, for I imagined that it would have something in it about Leslie and this Miss Harris-Clarke, and it did.

"Dear Child:"

she wrote, in her funny, curly writing which I like so much!

"I am in receipt of rather astounding news, and news that does not entirely please me, however, it is news that must be accepted, and perhaps everything that comes of it will be good; I am afraid I am often a most apprehensive old maiden lady!

"Leslie last night telephoned me that she intends to spend the winter in Florence and study with Signor Paggi, and that with her will go a young friend who is —only temporarily, I am afraid—in Leslie's complete favor.

"What led to this impulsive plan, I have only a faint notion, but that makes no difference; it is the work out of it that bothers me.

"Because you will be involved, I shall have to be more frank about Leslie than I like; and I think I shall do it through rules.

"You are not to play maid to Leslie; run ribbons in her clothes, errands for her, or answer her many and various whims. No doubt this particular interest will last about two or three weeks, and during that time I insist that you go your own way in complete independence and remember you are under no obligation to a girl who is—I am sorry to say—both spoiled and lazy.

"Love to you, dear child, and the best of luck with Signor Paggi; I—I know—am going to live to be even more proud of you than I am at this moment!

"Always affectionately and devotedly your friend,

"SHEILA PARRISH."

and then the date. I thought it was a nice letter and I read it several times and then I tore it up in tiny pieces and sat down to answer it, and to assure Miss Sheila, without rapping on wood—and it never *hurts* to rap on wood!—that I knew that everything would be all right.

Lunch came right in the middle of my writing, and after lunch I went to one of the practice rooms —which were way down the hall—and played for a while. Then I finished my letter, and decided I

would go out and post it, which worried Miss Julianna, whom I met in the hall.

"No," she said, shaking her head hard, "You get lost."

"But the Italians are awfully easy pointers," I said—I had learned even then that they wave their hands a lot—"and as long as they can do that, and I can say 'Piazza Indipendenza' and 'Pension Dante' I guess I'll get along all right; you see how it would work—"

"Yes," she answered, "may-*be*, but thees Meester Wake, he take you soon? I theenk better to take the small walk first—please?"

And because she looked anxious, I said, "All right," and smiled at her and then said, "Good-by," and started down the stairs.

These were of stone, and the banisters made of twisted iron, and the walls were, like most of the other walls, of painted or frescoed plaster. The hall was cold and draughty as well as dark, and so quiet that every step I took echoed loudly, and so, when I stepped out into the warmth and light and noise of the street, the contrast was complete.

I blinked a moment before I started, and then I drew a deep breath because—well, it made you *feel* that way!

As in Genoa, I don't remember half I saw, but I do remember the *different* things, and the sort of things that I never could have seen in a

Pennsylvania town of fifteen thousand people that is surrounded by hills with oil wells on them.

The first one that struck in was two officers who looked as if they had just been painted, and wound up somewhere between the shoulder-blades, although they were much handsomer than any toys I'd ever seen. One of them had a mustache that tilted up, and he twirled this; the other flung his wide blue cloak back over his shoulder as he passed me, with a gesture that *looked* careless, but couldn't have been so, because it was so packed with grace! I walked behind them, looking at their high, shining boots, and their broad, light blue capes and the gilt braid and the clanking swords. And I did wonder how they ever could win if they got mixed up in a real fight, and I knew that they did, for Father had said they were fine and gallant soldiers.

Then they turned a corner, and I was ever so sorry until I was diverted by a man who was sprinkling his pavement with water that he had in a chianti bottle; he wanted the dust kept down in front of his shop, which was an antique place, but that quart bottle full of water was all that he dared use!

By that time the Park—I mean the Piazza Indipendenza—was behind me, houses and shops were on the other side instead of green, and the way was narrow.

After I walked two blocks on this I saw a fountain that was on the side of a building opposite, and it was made of blue and white china, with green leaves and gold oranges and yellow lemons all around it. I thought it was so wonderful, and for once in my life I thought right, because even the critics seemed to half enjoy it. I found it was made by a fellow named della Robbia who had been dead hundreds of years, and that his work was fairly well known in Italy. Well, I looked at it a while, and then I remembered my letter, and went up to two old ladies who were sitting on a doorstep eating some funny little birds that had been *cooked with the heads and feet still on them.*

I smiled, stuck out my letter, and said, "Where?"

And I never heard anything like the outburst that followed! They both got up and clutched my sleeves, and pointed their hands that were full of bird-lunch, and nodded their heads and patted my back, and kept explaining—in forty-seven ways—where the mail box was. It was really very funny, and I thought I was never going to get away!

After I did—and I hadn't half as much idea of where the box was as I had when I stopped—I went on, and after while I saw something that looked suspicious, and after I saw a woman drop

a postcard in it, I dropped my letter, and then turned.

Going back, I waved at the old ladies, and said "Grazie," which I had learned meant thank you, and they bobbed their heads and called, "Niente, niente, Signorina!"

Then a group of soldiers from the ranks clattered past me in their olive drab and the heavy shoes that announce their coming, and again I was at the doorway through which I could reach the Pension Dante, wondering whether it was really true, or whether my program had slipped to the floor during the first act?

And then I rang the pension bell and went in and up.

Going in, and away from all the shrill, staccato street noises, and the smells—which sometimes aren't nice, but are always different—going in and away from all this seemed tame, but after I got up and Beata had opened the door, I was glad I had been decent enough to consider Miss Julianna's feelings because—

Miss Leslie Parrish, of Oyster Bay, Long Island, and Miss Viola Harris-Clarke, of Ossining, New York, had arrived! I heard them before they heard me, which is, perhaps, unfair, but it is sometimes also a decided advantage, and I *needed* all the advantages on my side! I knew it as soon as I heard them speak, and that they would probably

consider me countrified and make fun of me. I didn't care, but I was glad to get used to the idea of our being so different, before we met and I was plumped up against all that manner at one time.

It didn't take a Signorina Sherlock Holmes to know that they had come, and I didn't need Beata's wild pointing, for I heard their voices immediately although they were in a room that was well down the hall.

The first thing I heard was, "Simply *impossible!*" (I knew in a second that it was Leslie, and that it was her comment about the room) "You mean to say," she went on, "that my aunt has *seen* this?"

"Si, Signorina," Miss Julianna answered, and she didn't sound as if she were smiling.

"Well," I heard in Leslie's pretty, carefully used voice, "that is very *strange!* What do you *think,* Viola?"

"I don't know, dear," came in a higher, and a little more artificial voice, and then there was a silence.

A short, baffled kind of laugh, prefaced Leslie's "I'm absolutely at sea! I don't know whether to stay or not—but I—vowed I *would*—"

"We might get a few things," suggested Viola.

"*Yes*—" (doubtfully) "but the walls—streaks and soil—I *don't* know!"

Again there was a silence.

"You do as you like," said Miss Julianna quickly and in a rather brittle way. "I have keep the rooms at order of Mees Parrish, but you do not haf to stay—"

And then she came out of the room, and down the hall toward me. *"Insolent!"* I heard in Leslie's voice, and I wasn't much impressed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GETTING ACQUAINTED

THAT night, after a dinner during which Leslie and Viola looked as if they were chewing lemons, I went to call on them because I thought it was the polite thing to do. Goodness knows, I didn't want to! I was afraid that they would purr along about the weather, and that I would have to bob my head and smirk and say, "Yes, isn't it *charmingly* warm for this time of year?" and that kind of stuff which certainly bores me! But they didn't even bother to do that! They talked across me, and, although it wasn't comfortable, I will admit that it was instructive.

I think one can learn so *much* about people when they don't think it is worth while to be polite, or think they are alone in the bosom of their family.

I remember one time I walked home with Elaine McDonald from the Crystal Emporium where we had had a banana split, and her father, who thought she had come in alone, barked down at her as if she were a member of a section gang and he were the boss.

The thing that made it funny was the fact that

he is a purry man, and always wears a swallow-tail coat on Sunday, and passes the plate, and stands around after church bobbing and smirking over people, and saying, "It is a *real* pleasure to see *you* here, Mrs. Smith!" (or Mrs. Jones, or whoever it happened to be) He has a Bible class, too, and is the President of the Shakespeare Club, and I was surprised to hear him bawl out—bawl is a crude word, but it does belong here!—"Elaine, you left the fire on under the boiler and there's enough hot water here to scald a hog! You and your mother don't care how you run the gas and the bills—"

And then Elaine said, and, oh, so sweetly, "Papa, dear, Jane Jones is with me—"

And he said, "Ahem—how-a—how-a *nice,*" and then sneaked back into the bathroom and shut the door quietly and finished his shaving in deep silence. Which just shows—or should, because I am using it for the express purpose of illustration—how different people may be in public and while shaving. Of course Leslie and Viola didn't syrup up in a hurry as Mr. McDonald did, because they didn't consider me worth while, but I knew that they were capable of slapping on a sugar coating if they'd *wanted* to.

But, to get on, after dinner I waited around until half past seven, because the best people in our town never start out to make calls before

that hour, and I wanted to be correct. Then I went down the hall and tapped on Leslie's door because I heard a steady buzzing back of that and it intimated that the newcomers were together and inside. After I tapped I waited. Then some one slammed a trunk lid, and I heard an impatient, "What *is* it?"

"It's me," I answered, and realized too late that I shouldn't have said that. I should have said, "It is I," but I am always making mistakes. Then I heard, "Vi, open the door—"

And Viola Harris-Clarke let me in.

Leslie, who was leaning over a trunk fishing things out of it, only looked over her shoulder inquiringly for a second, and then turned back after a "Hello," that had a question mark after it.

"I thought I'd come over and see how you were getting on," I said.

"Well, sit down—" said Leslie, "that is, if you can find a place!" And I pushed aside a pile of silk under-things that was on the end of a lounge, and roosted there. And then I waited to have Leslie ask how I was, because at home that always comes first. People usually sit in rocking chairs, and the called on person will say, as they rock, "Well, now Mrs. Jones, how are *you?*" And after the caller answers, they get along to the children and then ask about the father, and next about how the canning is getting on, or the housecleaning,

or the particular activity that belongs to the season. It is *always* like that in our town with any one who calls, which I consider polite and interested and nice; but I didn't get it with Leslie; instead she went right on unpacking.

I looked at her with a good deal of interest, and I decided that she was the prettiest girl I'd ever seen. Her hair is very light in shade and texture, and she wears it straight off her forehead, flat at the sides, and in a psyche knot. (I learned later that Paris is through with the puffs) She is tall and thin and graceful, and her skin is fair and it flushes easily. Her lashes and brows are dark, and her lashes curl up, (a few days later I saw her help them curl up with a little brush) and she has a classic profile, slender hands and feet, and a languorous, slow way of looking at a person that can be either flattering or—flatt*en*ing.

Viola was another story, and just the way she looked explained every single thing about her.

You could see that she was a *follower*.

Her hair had been bobbed, and she had had to bob it, not because it was becoming to her, but because every one was bobbing it. Now she wore it as nearly as Leslie wore hers as she could, with a net over it, and millions of pins to keep the short ends of the slowly lengthening hair from flying. Her eyebrows were what she called "Frenched" which meant that she pulled them out and

screeched terribly while doing it, and her finger nails were too pointed and too shiny. Her mouth was too big, and her chin receded a little, but she might have been nice looking if she hadn't made such a freak of herself. She didn't look *natural* at all, and she wasn't pretty enough to justify all the fuss that the stupidest person could see she made over every detail.

She sat on a corner of the table, swinging her legs and humming.

"Isn't this simply ghastly?" Leslie asked of me, after an interval of some minutes' quiet.

"What?" I asked.

"Why, this *place*. I don't know *what* Aunt Sheila was *thinking* of!" then she dumped dozens of pairs of colored silk stockings out on the floor, and began to take out more and prettier dresses than I had ever seen before in all my life.

"How'd your frocks stand the crossing, dear?" asked Viola lazily.

"Oh, fairly. . . . Old rags anyway. . . . I didn't get a new *thing!*" Then she leaned down again and began to take out perhaps a dozen petticoats that shone in the light, and silk nightdresses and bloomers and a pink satin corset, and gray suède shoes with cut-steel buckles, and some gold shoes with straps and *ostrich* feather rosettes on the ankles, and some dark blue patent leather shoes with *red stitching*, and *red heels!*

"Isn't this simply ghastly?"

And as she did, she and Viola talked of people and places I had never *met,* and of how *frightful* the dinner had been, and of the "utterly hideous rooms!"

After quite a little time of this—although I suppose it seemed longer to me than it really was —Leslie sagged down on the corner of a trunk she had not yet opened, and hinted about some past chapters of her story that interested me and that was to have its love scene added in Florence, which I then, of course, didn't know.

"I came here," she stated, as she looked straight and hard ahead of her, "on pique."

"I *knew* it!" murmured Viola.

"Nonsense!" Leslie answered, sharply. "Why how would *you* know?"

"Dear, I saw you were *suffering*—"

That smoothed Leslie; I could see her feathers settle, and when she went on all the irritation had left her voice.

"Some one," she confided, "and it doesn't matter in the least who, since he has gone from my life—I assure you I have absolutely put every *thought* of him away—intimated that I could do nothing but be a butterfly. He was brutal, absolutely *brutal!*

"And I—perfectly enraged—said I could work, and I would show him that I could. And that very night—Vi, are you sitting on my ostrich feather

fan?—oh, all right, I thought I saw something pink there; no, I don't mind the scarf—"

"Go on, dear," said Viola, after her exploration and a wiggle that settled her again.

"That very night," Leslie continued, "I telephoned Aunt Sheila, who happened to be in town and at the Plaza, and I told her I intended to come here and study with Signor Paggi. She was just as *mean* as she could be. 'Very well, Leslie,' she said in that crisp way in which she often speaks. 'But he won't keep pupils who don't work—' . . . '*He will keep me,*' I answered, and my voice shook. . . . I was fearfully overwrought —my heart had already been *trampled upon*—"

I thought that sounded silly, but Viola didn't, because she said, "My *dear!*" rather breathed it out as if some one had taken her lungs and squeezed them just as she began to speak.

Leslie looked up at the ceiling and swallowed hard, in a way she considered tragic, and it was, but it also made me think of Roberta's canary when it drinks. Then she rubbed her brow, laughed mirthlessly, and ended with, "*and here I am!*"

"The bath tub's the worst," said Viola, which sort of took the cream off of Leslie's tragic moment, and I could see that Leslie didn't like it, for she frowned.

"I don't know what to do," said Leslie after a

small lull, "whether to hunt some other place, or stand this—"

"Our trunks are all here," Viola stated, "and it would be hard to move—" (she had unpacked, and I found later she hated effort) "I wondered whether we couldn't get a few little extra things—curtains, and cushions and so on? And the food we could supplement. I can make fudge and chicken king."

"I am certain I can make tea," said Leslie, "it's only a matter of the proper pot and a spirit lamp and some water, and then throwing the stuff in —I've seen it done dozens of times."

"And we could buy rolls and things—"

Then they paused to consider it.

"Don't most students do that sort of thing anyway?" I asked.

"It *would* be Bohemian," said Leslie, in a more energetic voice than I'd heard her use before.

"And after we get famous they'll photograph this ghastly hole, and say *we lived here*—" Viola added, with a far-away, pleased look.

"I'm willing to try it," agreed Leslie, in a dull tone I felt she put on. "I don't care much—what happens now, anyway!"

"Poor darling!" murmured Viola, and in that "Poor darling," I saw the shadow of a row, for I knew that Viola couldn't keep that up all the time, and I knew that when she stopped Leslie

would be angry, and I knew that they were too foolishly and sentimentally intimate to remain good friends. However, I never dreamed for a second, then, that they would come to *me* to complain about each other! Which was just what they did!

It was dreadful for me; there was a time when I never went into my room without finding one or the other waiting to sniff out their tales, tales which they almost always prefaced in this way: "I *never* talk about my friends—" (sniff) "You can ask" (gulp) "*any one* where I do—" (sniff) "but I want you to know that I have never been treated—" (gulp-sniff) "as I have been treated since I came to this place in company—" (real sob) "with that—that *creature!*"

When I think of it now, and then that first call, I could, as Viola says, "Simply *scream,* my dear!"

But I'm getting 'way ahead of my own story.

At half past eight, I stood up.

"Well, I guess I'd better go now," I said, but neither Leslie nor Viola said, "Oh, *don't* hurry—" as I supposed people always did, and so I did go. As I reached the door—alone—Leslie spoke:

"We go to see Signor Paggi to-morrow, don't we?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered, "at one."

"We might as well go together," she suggested, "although—" (her tone was too careless, and she

avoided looking at me) "we, of course, won't expect to act like Siamese triplets, will we?"

"I shall be busy a great deal," I stated, as I felt myself flush, and then I went out, and after a stiff good-night, went down the hall to my own room. It did seem to me that Leslie had been unnecessarily unkind in giving that hint, for I had only gone because I supposed it was polite, and I certainly never would push in! Mother had never *let* us do that!

I was angry, and as I undressed, I vowed that I would let Leslie entirely alone, and that she could make the first advances—if any at all were ever made—and I wondered what kind of a man *could* like a girl of Leslie's type, and what he had said that had made her do a thing that was so evidently distasteful. I was really interested, and I couldn't help hoping that this man who had been "pushed from her life" had socked it to her *hard,* (and I found later he had!) and I further hoped —without even trying to help it—that I could squelch her some day. Then I said my prayers and crawled into bed.

As I pulled up the blankets one of the *sounds* that belong to Florence tinkled in through my widely opened French windows. . . . Somewhere, in some little church or convent, bells were ringing and sounding out steps in mellow tones that floated softly through the air. . . . It was

very, very pretty. . . . And I closed my eyes, and I could see lilies-of-the-valley and blue bells growing near ferns. . . . That doesn't seem very sensible unless you've *heard* those bells, but if you have—on a warm-aired, soft Italian night—you'll probably understand. Then the bells died gently down to nothing and I heard another sound, and when I heard that I saw people clogging, for it was a banjo, and I got out of bed in a hurry, and skipped over to the window without even waiting to put on my slipprs.

I couldn't see much down in the court, because the wide banners of light that floated out from the doorways only seemed to intensify the shadows, and the banjo-player was sitting on a bench by the side of a back door and not in the light.

But I could hear, and I heard, in a very pretty voice with the soft strum of the banjo creeping through:

"Dozens and dozens of girls I have met,
Sisters and cousins of men in my set:
Tried to be cheerful and give them an earful
Of soft sort of talk, but, oh, gosh!
The strain was something fearful!
Always found after a minute or two
Just to be civil was all I could do.
Now I know why I could never be contented,
I was looking for a pal like you."

And I knew the tune, and it is one I liked, and the singing in my own language was cheering and

rather jolly, and the feeling the man put into the foolishly light words made me laugh, and I leaned far out and listened.

Then I heard a snatch of a Neapolitan song that better fitted the look of the court, and then a bit of opera. . . . The troubadour faltered on that, and right in the middle of it he stopped, repeated one phrase, and then called, "Hi, Gino, old Top! Ta tum, ta tum, ta ta, ta tum—that *right?*"

And Gino echoed it in his voice, and answered excitedly, "Si, si, Signor! Brava! Brava, Signor! Brrrava!

And then, warmed and cheered and quite myself again, I went back to bed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SIGNOR PAGGI'S COMPLIMENTS

SIGNOR PAGGI'S studio is high up in one of those old palaces that seem to frown at you, and the palace is on the Via Tornabuoni, which is a street where lots of the wealthy and great people of old Florence lived, hundreds of years ago.

At that time of course—years back, in the middle ages—they knew nothing of modern improvements like portable houses or the sort of stucco bungalows that get full of cracks after the first frost, and so they put their houses up in the old-fashioned way, which does seem to wear well, for they stand to-day as they stood when they were built.

I liked looking at them; there is a great deal in my nature that answers to a real fight, and those houses were built for convenient fighting. Probably then, the architects were fussing over nice, little windows through which the owner could pour hot oil on a passing enemy, instead of the sun porches and breakfast rooms and the kind of truck that now occupies them.

It gave me a romantic, chilly thrill to see the

blank walls of the first stories, which make the streets where the palaces exist look so cold and stern, for I realized that they didn't have low windows in them because if they had had, people who felt like it could throw in bricks and things of such forceful nature, too easily.

They needed this type of dwelling because they scrapped so much. The Medicis, an old Florentine family, and all dead, but still somewhat talked about, were always fighting somebody or other, and so were the Strozzis and Tornabuonis, who were also prominent hundreds of years ago, but still remembered, I found, by a good many. I, personally, don't wonder, and I must admit that more than once during my stay in Florence I wished I could skip back into the Middle Ages for a day or so, and root at just one good fight.

However, I realize that this is not a natural wish for "A young woman of refinement," as Leslie would say.

We reached Signor Michele Paggi's studio at the time when we should, in spite of the fact that Leslie kept every one waiting while she took off a veil with brown speckles in it and put on one that had black dots stuck on it and then, after that was done, went back to hunt a pair of gloves with gray and white striped gauntlet tops.

"First impressions," she said, and almost apologetically, "are *everything*, don't you know?

And I'd hate my veil not being right just this first time—"

"You have a perfect *genius* for assembling the proper accessories," said Viola, who just a moment before had grumbled out, "*Heavens,* what is she doing? I never knew any one who could *fuss* so over nothing!"

And then we went down our long stairs, through the crowded heart of Florence, up the four flights of stairs that took us to Signor Paggi's floor, and down the hall toward the only door that had a placard on it, to find that the placard had Signor Michele Paggi's name on it, and a curt invitation to walk in scrawled below that. We did. And I knew that my saying I was frightened reveals a yellow streak, but I *was* frightened, so I might as well say it.

Mr. Paggi's verdict meant a very great deal to me, and I had heard that he sometimes refused to teach. And although I had tried not to remember that, I did remember it as people do remember things they try to cover in their minds. Those covered thoughts are always straying out! You are forever seeing a corner of one trailing out from under the thing you've thrown over it—or at least I am—and Mr. Paggi's turning people away was one of them. I didn't know quite what I would do if he turned me away, because of Miss Sheila and Mother and all the rest. They ex-

pected so much of me and I felt as if I'd die if I couldn't keep them from disappointment. And of course I had my own dreams too.

Well, Leslie and Viola were entirely at ease, and somehow—I can't explain—it didn't help me, in fact their ease made me more uncomfortable. And while they walked around saying, "*Adorable* place!" "So much *atmosphere!*" and things like that, and wiggled their fingers to limber them up, I sat in a chair that looked better than it felt and swallowed and swallowed and swallowed, and almost wished that I had been like Roberta who plays nothing but rag, and ukelele accompaniments.

After quite a little time of this I saw a copy of the Saturday Evening Post on the table, and got it, and I was really beginning to be absorbed in something by Ring Lardner when an Italian girl came in. She was a sullen type, and she said "Good day," without smiling.

"We are waiting for Signor Paggi," Leslie said in her sweetest way, but it didn't melt the girl who answered in the short-clipped manner that many Italians speak English, ending each word abruptly and completely before she started another. And she spoke in a level too, which made her seem most unsympathetic, and fussed over the leaves of a big ledger as she answered.

"I don't know whether he see you—" she stated.

"But—" (Leslie laughed in an irritated, tried way) "we have an *appointment!*"

"He don't care. When he have headache he don't care for devil. You can wait, you can go, it is the same." And then she disdainfully fluttered the big leaves she had been turning slowly.

"Will you be good enough to tell him," said Leslie in a tight controlled way, "that Miss *Parrish,* that Miss Leslie *Parrish* is here?"

The girl looked up.

"No," she answered, "I do not wish to have the book push through the air at me—so—" (she made a hitchy, overhead girl-gesture of throwing) "and he do not care who you are. Why should he care who you are?" she ended, her eyes now on Leslie and boring into Leslie. It was almost like a movie!

"*Really*—" broke out Leslie, and then she stopped and shrugged her shoulders and walked over to stand by a window that had a row of century plants on its sill. And here she hummed to pretend that the whole matter was beneath her notice, but she tapped her foot and *I* knew that she was angry.

Then we waited, and I never felt as if I did so much waiting as I did then, although the waiting wasn't stretched across more than half an hour. It was stretched tightly, and that makes all the difference!

At last the inner door opened—we came to call what lay behind that door "The Torture Chamber"—and a woman came flouncing out. After her passing, a little man with stiff, coarse hair which stood straight up from his head, and a waxed mustache, paced up and down inside the little room. He looked as if he should be wearing a red uniform trimmed with gilt braid and snapping a short, limber whip at crouching lions; I've seen dozens just like him in cages!

"*Temperamental!*" Leslie whispered, and she was right!

"*Fascinating,*" Viola answered, in the same kind of a low, highly charged wheeze. Then we waited some more.

At last Signor Paggi came to the door and stared at us.

"Well?" he snapped, and I was glad to leave the business to Leslie, who stood up and spoke.

"Signor Paggi," she said, "we have been sent here, because in America you are regarded as the most *marvelous* person—"

"I do not make fools play," he broke in, "*You remember that!* You have appointment?"

"Yes," Leslie answered, and with a good deal of resentment in her tone, "I told your office girl, but she—in a manner I must, in fairness to your interests, Signor Paggi, tell you was *insolent*—told me—"

"Very good secretary," (he again interrupted) "I can get many pupils, but only in my life once have I found the good secretary. Come in—"

And, silent, we followed him.

The room was large and almost empty. It had a bench in it, a table on which was some music, a piano, and near that the chair that Signor Paggi sat in when he wasn't too agitated to *sit*.

"You first," he said, almost before we had crossed the threshold, and he pointed at me. I went to the piano and sat down. "Well, play!" he barked and I think I played something of MacDowell's.

"Stop!" I heard. I stopped.

"What do you see?"

"Nothing," I answered.

"It is very clear you see nothing. It is *awful*. You play like a *peeg!* Toodle, toodle, toodle, SQUEAK! *Oh—*" and then he clasped his hand to his forehead and glared up at the ceiling.

"You must see peecture," he said after a moment of silence, "a pretty peecture; I give you time to theenk." (He did) "Now go!"

And I did.

I don't know what I played, but I saw our living room; the lounge that has grown lumpy from the twins jumping on it; the piles of popular music on the piano; mother's darning in a big basket by the table; the Boston fern in the bay win-

dow; even a pan of fudge that didn't harden, with a knife in it, and Roberta's knitting—always a tie—half poked under a sofa cushion.

And I suppose that doesn't *seem* like a pretty picture, but it was pretty to me, and it carried me through.

"You can take lessons from me," Signor Paggi said, as I finished. I thanked him in a little squeaky voice that must have sounded funny.

"And now," he went on, "you can get up. You theenk you seet upon my piano stool all day? You do *not.*"

And then I got up and went over to the bench, and my knees shook more than they had as I went over to the piano, which was so silly that it made me ashamed. Leslie took my place, and I don't think she was much frightened. She was pretty sure of her playing she told us later, and she was used to playing for people, and her assurance I thought would help her, but—it didn't. Signor Paggi let her play all her selection, before he spoke, and as he did he *cleaned his nails with a toothpick.*

"Are you deaf?" he asked in an interested, remote way.

"Certainly *not,*" Leslie answered haughtily.

"Ah, how greatly then do I pity you! To hear yourself *play!* Oh, *my!*" (And again he clasped his forehead and rolled his eyes at the ceiling)

"And also, you improve on Mr. Bach," he went on, after his tragedy moment was past. "It is very *kind* of you to show the master how he should do. No doubt he is *grateful! I* think he turn in the grave. . . . Mr. Paderewski have great sense; to work for a country who is lost is better than to teach some I have met. . . . Oh, *my!* Some fool teach you that in girls' school? *You will drop airs with me, and play what is upon the sheet. You see?*"

Leslie, with scarlet cheeks, and bright, angry eyes, got up, and nodded. Then Viola was summoned, and I felt most sorry for her because she had no nerve and she wobbled all the way over to the piano, but she did better than either Leslie or I, and she got off with "Skip that and thanks to heaven it will be shorter!"

And so ended that hard half hour that seemed hours long, and started all our winter's work in Florence.

CHAPTER NINE

A STROLLING PICNIC

AFTER we had made a slinking exit that took us into the outer room, and the girl, at a nod from Signor Paggi, had put our names down in the book and given us slips upon which were our names and lesson hours, we started down stairs and no one said a word. I think we would have kept quiet for a long, long time if I hadn't started laughing, but I did—very suddenly and without really knowing that I wanted to—and Viola, after a moment, joined me in a weak, close-to-hysterical way. Leslie didn't laugh and her eyes were hard and her chin set, and she was so angry that she walked as if she had been wound up too tightly. She made me think of "Mr. Wog," a mechanical toy man, that the twins start into the living room from the dining room door sometimes when Roberta has company. It makes her very angry, because she says it looks *so* silly, and she says that it naturally embarrasses a man to realize that some one has been listening to *every* word he said. The twins told me that they wait around in the dark under the dining room table

until they hear the caller tell Roberta that she is so sympathetic, or beautiful, or that they have *long* admired her, and then they crawl out with their wound toy and start it in. Louise, who is the elder by two minutes, said that "Mr. Wog" almost always broke into Roberta's soft, "Oh, *do* you think so?" and that they always had to stuff their handkerchiefs right into their mouths to keep from screaming with giggles.

But to get on, Leslie walked as Mr. Wog walks, and when she spoke she did so between sharply indrawn breaths and in a way that told a lot she didn't trouble to put into words.

"Aunt Sheila *knew* this old *devil*—" she said, "I make *no* apologies for calling him that—and what she did was *vicious,* positively *vicious!* She —she said I wouldn't stick, *made* me say I *would,* in fact—" (she paused, and had to draw several quieting breaths before she could go on) "in fact I wagered her a cottage that father gave me last birthday, a *heavenly* sweet place up on Lake Placid, I wagered her *that,* that I would stick it out and study with this horrible person! . . . And if I can ever punish Ben Forbes for all this, I will consider that life has given me—*all the sweetness I shall ever crave!*"

Then we stepped out into the street.

Of course it seemed about sixteen times as bright as it really was, because both the halls and

Mr. Paggi's rooms had been dark, and it seemed more good to be out than I can describe. After I blinked my eyes into adjustment with the outdoor glare, I stole a side glance at Leslie and wondered what sticking it out—if she *could* stick it out—would do for her? I knew that she would either flare up and leave it all, or that she'd have to change, and I remembered how Howard McDonald, who is Elaine's brother, had learned to keep his temper by playing baseball. The training, and the having to abide by decisions that he thought unfair had been *fine* for him, and after a season of playing short-stop, everybody wondered whether he had changed, or whether they'd been mean? *"Will you—can you stand it?"* I questioned inside, and Leslie answered, almost immediately, quite as if I'd put my wonder into words.

"I am going to go through with it," she stated through set teeth. "If I die of disease from living in that frightful hole, or from shocked, shattered nerves after a lesson, perhaps Aunt Sheila *may* have a question or two to ask of herself!"

"He couldn't have known who you *are,* dear," said Viola, who was groping around to find the right key.

Leslie laughed shortly.

"Aunt Sheila said I depended on that," she confided. "That was during one of her all-too-frequent moments of flattery. Sometimes I think I

have been the most misunderstood girl who has ever lived! And oh, how I ache, alone, in my fumbling through the dark!"

She stared ahead like everything after that; I guess she was trying to look dramatic. Viola said, "Poor *darling, I* understand." And then Leslie said, "I—" (her voice dropped and broke) "I am close to fainting—I need *tea*—" and so they went to Doney's which is the fanciest restaurant in Florence and marked "expensive" in Baedeker. After the remark about Siamese triplets I didn't intend to have her think *I* wanted to be asked to her party, so I said, "I must leave you here—" although I had no idea where I was, or where I should be going.

"Must you, really?" Leslie asked so vaguely, that I got mad all over again and answered with, "I generally say what I mean," which of course was *not* polite. Then, feeling a little ashamed of myself, I turned and left them and began to wonder which Italian I should ask where I was and where I was going—in English; but I kept passing them, and going farther and farther all the time because the doing it seemed hard.

Then suddenly I saw some one who was ahead of me, and I hurried, for I knew the gray homespun coat and the swing of the gray hat brim.

"Wait!" I called, and he turned, and then he was laughing down at me, and saying, "I just went

up all those stairs that lead to the Pension Dante to hunt you, and found you out—and found *where* you were—now tell me about it!"

"Oh, Mr. Wake!" I said, and I drew a deep breath because I was so glad to see him, and so relieved over finding some one who could talk as I did.

"Pretty bad?" he questioned, with a kind look.

"I'm *so* glad to see you," I stated, which wasn't exactly an answer, but it pleased Mr. Wake, for he said, "Why, dear child, how *mighty* fine of you!" and pumped my hands up and down in his. Then he said, "Look here, I've a plan. I say we go collect some food, spoil your dinner, add another inch to my tummy, and have a picnic. Like 'em?"

"Love them!" I answered.

His eyes twinkled down at me, and all the little laugh wrinkles on his temples stood out.

"*Good!*" he said, "I know a little shop down here, on a dark arched street, where Dante may have passed his Beatrice, and in that little shop there are cakes that must make the angels long to come down on parole. And near this bake shop is a wine shop, where I shall buy you either some vermouth, or some coffee, and my plan is to collect our goods, assemble them, and then eat. Is it welcome?"

"That's exactly the sort of thing that suits my temperament," I answered. "I can hardly

forgive a person who uses a spoon on an ice cream cone!"

That made him laugh, although I don't know why, and he took my hand in his, and drew it through his arm.

"Amazingly improper I am told," he said as he did it, "but a fine way for comrades to walk, and I feel that we are going to be real comrades and friends."

"I *hope* so," I said, for I was liking him more and more all the time.

Then we didn't talk for a little time, and I began to enjoy looking into the windows of the smart shops that are on the Via Tornabuoni, and at the gay crowds that shift and change so constantly. There were dandies lounging at the curbs, swinging their canes, curling their mustaches, and searching through the crowd, with soft-sentimental brown eyes, for some pretty girl at whom they could stare—to stare, in Italy, is a compliment! Then there were bright spots made by the women with their high-heaped trays of flowers, and the funny spots made by the insistent little boys who try to sell postcards and sometimes can't be discouraged even by a sharp "Basta!" which seems to mean "Get out!" and "Enough!" and other things of that kind, all rolled into one!

In the street, the sharp cracking of the cabmen's whips and their shrill, high calls made a new sound

for me to add to my collection, and the beautiful motors which slid by made me wish that Elaine McDonald could have *one glimpse;* because one day at Roberta's sewing club when all the rest of the girls were saying that my going away was fine and everything, Elaine had said that she would rather stay in Pennsylvania than go and hobnob with organ grinders, and *I* think she was jealous.

I liked all this more than I can say, and with Mr. Wake I wasn't bothered by the crowds. Florence has about the same population as Baltimore, although Mr. Wake said it didn't seem so because so many Italians crowd in a few rooms, and they live so tightly packed. One can walk to the edge of the city anywhere easily, for it doesn't cover much space, but to me it seemed very large and, at first, confusing.

After we had walked some time we turned in a tiny street that had an archway over it, and seemed as dark as ink from contrast to the sunny street we'd left. I liked it, and, as I picked my way over the big cobblestones, I said so.

"It is a part of Florence that most tourists miss," said Mr. Wake, "and it is too bad, for it is the most characteristic part. Ah, here we are—" he ended and we turned in a tiny doorway from which came the pleasant smell of hot sugar and warm bread.

We got our cakes—which were very good—and

took them in our hands, and went on a few doors, around a corner, up a few steps—and those right in the street at the back of some great palace—and then we turned into a broader way and found a shop that had the entire front open—they roll up during the day time and stay up even through all the winter—and here I had coffee and Mr. Wake a tiny glass of wine, and we ate and drank as the girl who had served us looked on and smiled. It was *very* pleasant, and I had a *fine* time! I told him about my interview with Signor Paggi and he thought I had got off easily.

After we had eaten and talked we walked up past the Loggia dei Lanzi which has statues in it that commemorate all sorts of historic events and faces the square in which there is a replica of Michael Angelo's David; the square is large, and very busy with quickly passing people, and the people who pause to make small groups that are always dissolving, and ever reforming; and these people always look futile. I didn't know why, but Mr. Wake said that the Palazzo Vecchio, which is at right angles to the Loggia dei Lanzi and looks scornfully down over everything, made it.

"See that old building over there?" he said, as he pointed with his cane.

"Um hum," I answered, as I looked way up at the great big tower, and tried to keep my mouth

shut while doing it. I don't know why it is so easy to look up with your mouth open!

"In there," said Mr. Wake, "are ghosts who talk of making war upon a neighboring town. They fear that Fiesole is growing too strong, Fiesole that looks down from the hill behind you."

"Did they fight like that?" I asked.

"Exactly like that! And without putting anything on the bill-boards about it beforehand. . . . You see Italy was—not so long ago either—a land of little countries, for each city had its rulers, and fought for its rights, to keep its possessions, or to gain others. . . . And a lot of the plans went on in there—" and again he pointed with his cane.

"How old is it?" I asked, and then he told me and I gasped, for it was begun late in twelve hundred and finished in thirteen-hundred, fourteen.

"Not so old for Florence," said Mr. Wake, after my gasp, "you know the original Battistero, or Baptistery, was built probably in seventh or eighth century. It was remodeled to its present condition, practically, in 1200.

"No, I didn't," I said, and humbly.

"Well, you've lots of time. And you'll need it. There's lots to see; the house where Dante lived, and the tomb of Galileo, and the grave of Mrs. Browning, and the literary landmarks—Thomas Hardy wrote things in this town, and George Eliot

came here, and oh, ever so many more—and right before you in the middle of this square Savonarola was burned—"

And I had to ask who he was; I knew that I had heard the name, but I am lots better at remembering faces then I am at remembering names.

"The Billy Sunday of the year of our Lord, 1490," said Mr. Wake, "who, after he had had more good art burned than has ever been produced since, displeased his followers, the Florentines, who tortured him—poor chap—and right over in that building, Jane—and then burned him."

"Why did he want the pictures burned?" I asked.

"The subjects hadn't any slickers on," said Mr. Wake.

"Feel anything here?" asked Mr. Wake, after we had been quiet a few minutes.

"I feel as if I don't matter much," I answered.

"That's it. . . . The old building smiles scornfully, and says, 'You will pass, but I shall stay!' "

Then we walked across the square between the cabs and motors, with the crowd, made up of soldiers and officers, and the big policemen—the carabinieri—who wear flowing capes and feathers in their hats, and always travel in pairs. As we reached the other side Mr. Wake told me one more thing, and then took me home.

I noticed a statue of a man who was carrying off a beautiful woman who struggled. There was lots of action in it; the girl looked as if she could play forward and the man looked as if he would be a whopper at the bat.

Mr. Wake saw me looking at them and said: "That's the way they did it in the old days, and, no doubt, had I lived then, I wouldn't be a bachelor. . . . Would you like the story?"

"Very *much*," I answered.

"Well," he said, as he twirled his cane, "this was the way of it. Very early in the history of Rome, the debutante crop must have been low, for there weren't enough wives for the young men, who were up and coming and probably wanted some one to darn their socks and to smile when they told their jokes. And then perhaps there was an extra income tax on the unmarried; they knew a lot about torture those days and so it is not impossible! Anyway, the Romans made a great festival in honor of Neptune, and they invited all the neighboring people to come and bring their families, and in the midst of the games the young Roman dandies rushed in among the spectators, and each selected a maiden that he thought he would like for his wife—it had to be a case of love at first sight, Jane—and carried her off.

"Soon after, the Sabine men, who were proba-

bly considerably put out, came bearing down upon Rome with loud shouts and the brandishing of glittering steel, and I myself can see the glare of it in the sun this day! . . . But the Romans drove them back that time. However—and now we have the real nub of the story, Jane, and the real confession of the heart of woman—although the records have it that the Sabine brides put up a most unholy row when they started out upon their wedding journeys, they evidently liked the job of being Roman wives, and really respected the men who didn't even give them time to pack or to cry just once again on mother's shoulder, for before the second battle opened between the enraged and outraged Sabines and the conquering males of Rome, the Roman wives, once Sabine girls, rushed between the warring factions and plead so prettily for peace that it was granted, and the story goes on that the two people were so united that their Kings reigned together, and that all thereafter was both peaceful and prosperous."

"Oh!" I said. I did *like* that story. "Did you ever feel like doing that?" I asked, for I thought it might be a confession of men as well as of women.

"I have," he answered, "and if I had—perhaps—perhaps it would have been better!" and then he smiled down at me, but the smile didn't bring out his laugh wrinkles, but instead it made him

look strangely old and tired, which made me wonder. We walked on, for a little time, silently.

"By the way," I said as we reached the covered corridor that is opposite the big Uffizi Gallery, "my Fairy Godmother writes letters!"

"And floats them to you upon dew?" asked Mr. Wake, "or does a spider throw them to you with a silver, silken thread?"

"No," I responded, "she puts a blue charm on the upper right hand corner, and the letter comes to me!"

"And something of a marvel at that," commented Mr. Wake. Then he dismissed fancies, and added, "You have heard from her?"

"Twice," I answered, "I had a letter yesterday, and one that was posted only an hour after it came to-day."

"I've a certain feeling—a want for seeing how fairy godmothers write," said Mr. Wake.

"It's in my pocket," I told him, and we stopped and I fumbled around until I found the large, stiff square.

"There—" I said. Mr. Wake took it.

"No doubt you think me a strange old chap," he said.

"Oh, no," I answered, "a great many people are interested in writing nowadays."

"It isn't that, but your fairy godmother brought to my mind the years when I believed in fairies.

. . . A very nice writing, isn't it? I think it is most charming, don't you, Jane?"

"See how it looks on the page," I said, taking it from him quickly, and then the letter from its envelope. "It *is* pretty, isn't it?"

"'Dear, dear Child:—'" he read, and then suddenly, as if he were irritated, or had been hurt sharply, added, "Here, here—I don't want to be reading your letters! And my soul, I must be getting you home! I've a dinner engagement over South of the Arno, and I will have to speed up a bit—"

And we did.

At dinner Leslie was uppish and unpleasant. I think she was still smarting from Mr. Paggi's attack, and that her pride was so shaken she had to pretend some of the assurance that she had lost that afternoon. Anyway, something made her get into a very elaborate dinner dress, and put a high, Spanish comb in her hair, and wear her big, platinum-set ring of diamonds, and a little flexible pearl-set bracelet, and a platinum chain with pearls on that. She looked beautiful, but Mother never thought it was in good taste to wear things that are unsuitable, and I don't either.

Leslie sailed in after Beata had brought in the soup, and Miss Meek, with whom Leslie had struck up a feud at the first meal, burst out with, "Oh,

my eye! Look at the Queen of Sheba!" which seemed to make Leslie awfully mad, so when Miss Bannister asked me what I had done during the afternoon, I told every one—to change the current—in spite of the fact that Miss Bannister had said, "One of my deaf days, and it doesn't matter in the least, don't you know. Only asked to be polite. Pass the bread."

"Mr. Wake?" said Leslie, after I had told of my walk, and the Loggia dei Lanzi and the Sabine story. "And he took you into an alley restaurant to eat? How *odd!*"

"Perhaps the poor old bounder is jolly hard up," said Miss Meek, who tries to be kind to people she likes.

"It wasn't that," I said, and I said it sharply, for I was getting more and more out of temper with Leslie. "We were hunting around for *atmosphere;* you ought to know what it is, *Miss* Parrish, you talk about it enough. . . . He has a villa out the Fiesole way and I guess a person with a villa wouldn't worry about a few cents, although I would like him *just* as well if he had to!"

"*That's* the staunch-hearted flapper!" put in Miss Meek, as Leslie murmured, "So many of the climbing sort rent fearful little places—really no more than chicken coops, and then call them villas! *So* amusing—"

"Did you mean my friend?" I asked quickly, as

I felt angry hot spots burn on my cheeks. You have to fasten Leslie. She likes to be mean in a remote, detached way, which is the meanest way one can be mean! Of course she didn't own up to it; I might have known she wouldn't! Instead, she answered with, "*Really,* why would I mean your friend whom I've never seen? What *possible* interest would I have in him?"

I didn't answer that; I couldn't, I was too angry. I ate instead, and so fast that I afterward came as close to feeling that I had a stomach as I ever do. If I had known then how Leslie would come to feel about Mr. Wake, and how she was one day to say, "Why didn't you *tell* me he wrote books?" I would have been comforted. But the veil that covers the future is both heavy and thick, (I guess I must have gotten that out of some book, but I can't remember where) and that evening I was to have nothing to comfort me.

Something diverted me on the way to my room, and that was Beata, who sat in the hall with her head on her pretty arms that were dropped on a table.

"Why, Beata!" I said, for she looked so forlorn, and I put my hand on her shoulder. That made her raise her head, and she looked at me and tried to smile, but there were tear stains on her cheeks and her heavy lashes were moist, and I saw that the red tie was crumpled up in her

hand and I was certain that the tie was a little link in her story.

"Oh, Signorina," she whimpered, and timidly groped for my hand, and when she found it she held to it tightly, while I patted her shoulder with the free one.

It seemed strange to stand there with her, understanding and helping each other without a word, when Leslie and I could not understand or help each other, with all our words in common.

Leslie sailed by at that moment, and raised her brows as she looked at the tableau I made with Beata.

She thought it was common. But it was not. I am not always certain of my judgment of her then, because at that time I didn't like her, but I know I am right in saying that she at that moment was the ordinary soul, for she would have gone past need, and—raised her brows in passing!

CHAPTER TEN

CREAM PUFFS, THE TWILIGHT, AND—

THE week that followed the day of our first visit to Signor Paggi allowed us all to find our grooves and to settle into them. And each day I, in my going, started with a continental breakfast—one can slip over these quickly!—and after I had had my two rolls and a pot of something that smelled a *little* like coffee and tasted a *lot* like some health drink, I went on to two hours of practising. I finished these when the clock struck eleven, and then I'd write letters, or sew fresh collars and cuffs in my blue serge, or wash stockings and underwear, or walk until it was time for the mellow, soft-toned bell that hung in the hall to be rung and for Beata to say, "È pronto!" which of course meant lunch, and that it was one.

After lunch I had two more hours of practising and then I could do as I liked again. Sometimes I walked—always if I hadn't in the morning—and sometimes I read or wrote, and once in a while Miss Meek asked me to play "draughts," by which she meant checkers, or Miss Bannister

would call me in her room to show me some old, faded, once brown, now yellowing photographs of the house where she had lived as a girl, and where her father, who had been "The Vicar," had died. And I always said they were *beautiful,* and she would nod, and keep on nodding for quite a while, and point out the vine that her mother had planted, and the place where her father sat under the trees and read his books, and the spot where she and her little sister, who was dead, had had their dolly parties. I think she enjoyed doing it, and I was so glad that I could look at the photographs and say that they were *lovely!* and ask her little questions which she seemed to like answering.

Dinner and the evenings were all about the same, with Mr. Hemmingway "a-hemming" and trying to remember, and Miss Meek barking out "Oh, lud!", or asking Leslie how "Lady Vere de Vere" was this evening? And Miss Bannister squeaking out questions and then telling whoever answered them that she didn't care what they said. And "not to bother, please—" and then—my room, for Leslie and Viola were very thick at that time—and they wouldn't have included me in any of their plans, even if I had let my pride weaken and let them see that I was a little lonely sometimes.

Of course I knew that I was in Florence to

work, and that I was the luckiest girl in the world to be there, and I told myself that *over* and *over* again! But a person's heart will go on feeling just as it wants to—in spite of all the person's reasoning and sense—and I must admit that some of those hours after dinner found me—well, not *exactly* happy. I think I really would have been pretty close to the edge of honestly real misery if it hadn't been for my Artist, who was working a good deal at night.

After I'd snapped on my electric light, which only lit the center of the great big room and made deep shadows behind each piece of furniture and turned the corners into inky blotches, I used to go to my window. If my artist were working, I'd go back to the electric turn, switch it off, and then cross the room again, scramble up to sit on the sill, rub my shins, for I always seemed to hit something in crossing! and—watch.

At first, he was painting with a model, and the model was a little Italian boy, and that was the most fun to see, because the artist's arranging him was interesting. He worked quickly those nights, and not very long. . . . Then came his working alone, and—what Leslie would have called, "Real *drama,* my dear!" For more than once I saw him stand away from his canvas, and study it in a way that told me he didn't think it right. . . . And once he dropped his palette on a

table, flung himself down in a chair and dropped his head in his hands.

I can't describe how interested I got in that picture and in the artist. I liked him even then—which does seem silly—but I did, and although I had never seen him enough closely to know his face, nor, of course, the picture, I felt that I must go tell him that it was *fine,* and that he mustn't be discouraged! I reached the point—and after only a little time of looking into his work room—of talking half aloud, and saying all the things I wanted to say right to him.

"It's *really* good," I would say, "you *mustn't* get discouraged! What do you do with that stick you hold?"

Of course he didn't answer, but it helped me, and I will say here that when any one is miserable from thinking of the kind of noise that they are used to at home, and the way their mother looks when she sits by the table with the drop light on it, mending, it is a good thing to get *really* interested in some one else! I know. I speak from experience!

That was the way the first week went; the second one started out with the most interesting experience, and it ended with another one—and one that I never, at that point, would have imagined *could* be! But Fate has a great many little knots in her threads which make her change

the pattern as she weaves, and Viola's dislike of sickness, and being with sick people, made Fate pause, then take a stitch and—draw me close to Leslie!

I reckoned time, quite naturally, not with the start of a calendar week, but from the day that I took my lesson. And it was on Wednesday, at five on a rainy afternoon, just after my second lesson that I came up the Via Tornabuoni all alone, stopped to buy three cream puffs, and then thought I'd step into the Duomo which almost fills the big Piazza del Duomo, and from its dome looks not only over all the city but far off to the hills.

It was hazy inside, for incense was floating, but the chill of the outside air that had come with the rain was gone, and the candles on the big altar made a pretty bright yellow blotch in the center of all the gray.

To people who only know churches in America, churches in Italy won't be understood, for Americans go to church stiffly, and then hurry off criticizing the sermon or complaining about the hymns that were sung; they never would think of standing around to talk in church the way the Italians do; or think of going into church carrying a live rooster by the feet, or of sitting down in the back of a church to eat a loaf of black bread and a slice of orange-colored cheese. But the

Italians do this, and all sorts of informal things, and it does make the churches seem very homelike and warm, and it's nice to go in them. I wandered around, and I even thought of eating a cream puff, but I decided I wouldn't because I hadn't been brought up to it, and because it would spoil my dinner and because cream puffs sometimes squeeze out when you bite and I had on my best suit, so I carried them in that tender way that a person carries cream puffs and enjoyed the real Italy that one finds *in* the churches.

There was a soldier from the ranks talking with his mother—I heard him call her "Madre mia"—which means "Mother of mine," and she smiled up at him until her face looked like a little winter apple—it was so full of wrinkles—and kept her hand on his arm which she kept patting.

Near them, on her knees by a confessional—which is a little box that looks like a telephone booth but really holds a Priest who *tries* to help you, instead of something that squeaks out, "The party doesn't *an*swer,"—was another sort of Italian, a woman who was beautifully dressed, and behind her was her maid who wore the gay costume of the Roman peasant and who carried the beautiful lady's little white dog.

Officers stood in groups chatting. Others came, dropped to their knees a moment, crossed themselves, and then joined them.

And a shabby old man with a lump on his back came in, got down to his knees very stiffly, and there looked at the altar for a long, long time as his lips moved. I don't know why that made my throat feel cramped, because he was getting help, and for that moment all of the big church was his, and his God was close to him, I know. But I did feel a little funny, and so I hurried on, to look at a statue by a man named Michael Angelo, who died nearly four hundred years ago, but whose work is still in style.

After that I watched a little boy and girl who were sitting on a kneeling chair, listened to the Priests, who were having a service up by the main altar, and then I went out.

I had been inside quite a little while, I knew, after I saw the outdoor light, for it was much darker, and the rain less a rain and more a fog. The people who hurried across the shining square with their funny flat umbrellas, looked like big black toadstools, and all the lights reflected in the puddles, and the bright windows were hazed.

I didn't want to put up my umbrella, because I love the feeling of a little moisture on my cheeks when I walk fast and get hot, but I had my cream puffs, and my best suit on, and so I did. And oh, how lucky it was that I did, for if I hadn't—but that comes later.

I went down the steps, and across the Piazza

del Duomo, keeping my eye out for the trams, (they call street cars "trams" in Florence) the cabs with their shouting, huddled up drivers, and the purring motors, and I turned down the street that would take me past the English Pharmacy, for I needed a toothbrush.

On this I had gone along a few feet when I saw a man ahead of me who swayed. I was quite used to seeing drunken men at home, but I wondered about him; and when I remembered that Mr. Wake said the Italians never drank too much, I wondered whether he was ill.

But I only wondered idly, as you do wonder on streets about things you pass, and I might have passed him if he hadn't, as I was beside him, suddenly clutched the handle of my umbrella just below the place I held it. Then he stood swaying, and looking down at me with eyes that were glazed and seemed close to sightless, as he said, "I beg pardon, Madam, I do—humbly beg—your pardon, I—"

And then he moistened his lips, and stopped, and I saw that he was really very ill.

I closed my umbrella, because once at home I saw a country-woman try to go through the revolving doors of our First National Bank with her umbrella up, and it impressed me with the fact that you can't use umbrellas very skilfully if you are trying, with both hands, to do some-

thing else. And I got it down *just in time,* for the tall man was swaying, and he needed all the help I gave him and—more!

"Sit down on this step," I said, and I put my hand under his arm to guide him.

After he was down, his head rolled limply to one side and then dropped back against the wall, his eyes closed, and when I spoke to him he didn't answer.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ENTER—SAM DEANE!

I KNEW he had fainted, but I spoke to him again to make sure, and I even laid my hand on his shoulder and shook him a little. Then I put my umbrella on the step, and my bag of cream puffs on that, and began to sop my handkerchief in the least dirty looking puddle that I could find. And all the time I did this I frowned just as hard as I could at two little Italian boys who had paused to look on, and I said "Basta!" very fiercely, but they didn't go on; instead they stood eating their chestnut paste and chattering with the greatest excitement. And soon their lingering proved a help to me, for their noise made an old lady pause. She had a tray of combs and hair-pins, that were studded with rhinestones and red glass, hung from her shoulder by a wide tape, and after she had studied the situation, she slipped the tape down over her arm, set her tray on the dryest spot she could find, and squatted before my charge and began to rub his hands. And while she did this she talked loudly and quickly at me until I was so confused that I lost all the use and

understanding of the thirty or forty Italian words that I really *did* know.

Then a shopkeeper who wore a long, once white apron and who was chewing a toothpick came along and stopped, and *he* asked questions, and the old lady and the little boys all answered at once, and made their arms go like hard-working, energetic windmills as they answered. Then two soldiers in their olive drab came along, and *they* paused and wanted to know what was wrong, and the little boys and the old lady *and* the shopkeeper answered *them,* and they stood talking. And then a well dressed man of, I should say, the middle class, saw our group, and joined it, and *he* wanted to know what was up, and when he was answered it sounded exactly like the point in a ball game where the home team makes the first run made, in the last half of the tenth inning.

And I suppose it must have been funny, but it didn't seem so to me then. The man had been unconscious for so long that I was very, very much worried, and I didn't know *what* to do!

And when still another man paused and asked *the* important question, and the whole thing was enacted again with even more enthusiasm, and more noise, I felt as if I were absolutely marooned. There was something very dreadful about those few moments during which I needed help so badly and had no way of asking for it.

The last man to join the volunteers stepped forward and I saw that he was an officer of the Infantry, and he looked as dapper as they always do in spite of the fact that mud was on his gleaming boots and that some passing cart or motor had evidently splashed mud up on a corner of his wide blue cape.

He bared his head and bowed to me, and then held out a little coral charm that looked like a horn, and which I found later are carried by millions of Italians as talismans against all sorts of evil.

He waved this and just at that moment the tall thin man happened to open his eyes; I heard the little crowd gasp, and then I saw them bow their heads and cross themselves quickly—and the little boys got chestnut paste on their blouses by their doing this—and then there was even higher, shriller, faster chatter, and through this my charge spoke.

"What's—the row?" he asked weakly.

"You fainted," I answered.

"Fool thing to do," he said, and he tried to get up, but the trying made him so dizzy that he had to sink back again, and then he closed his eyes as people do when they are confronted by a whirling world that has black spots before it.

"We have lots of time," I assured him, and just as gently as I could, for I did feel *so* sorry

for him. And then I turned to the Italians, and said "Grazie, *grazie!*" as hard as I could, and bowed as if the affair were quite over, and all of them except the little boys drifted away. After that I reached down and put my fingers on the sick man's wrist, and when I located his pulse I found that it was pretty slow and that made me ask the elder of the two boys—in two languages, and five waves—if he could get a glass of water. And that made *him* nod and lay down his slab of chestnut paste by my patient on the step, and that told me a story. And I never in my life have felt so badly, or so sorry for any one, as I did when I began to understand.

For the sick man looked at that nibbled little slab, and moistened his lips, and then he looked away. And then he looked at it again, and shifted his position, and once he even reached out toward it, and then he sat back and for a moment covered his eyes.

And I knew *right then* why those cream puffs had beckoned me from the window of the gay pastry shop! I opened the bag.

"Sometimes," I said, "when I'm faint, I eat; it takes the blood away from your stomach or puts it there, or something." And honestly, Roberta *couldn't have said it any better!*

Well, he took one, and he tried to eat it slowly, but he couldn't. After he finished it, he said,

"Thank you ever so much—I believe I must have missed my lunch—I sometimes get interested in work—" and then he paused and looked down at the bag.

"It'll take more than one to help you," I said, "you were *awfully* faint—"

But he shook his head. "No," he answered, decidedly, "but thank you—and so much—you got those for yourself, and I'm afraid I've spoiled your party now—you have been *most kind—*" and then he drank the water the little boy had brought, said a few words of thanks in Italian, and sat looking before him. I had settled by him on the step, and sitting there wasn't bad, for the rain had turned to so gentle a mist that it was little more than a fog, and it was getting so dark that the passing venders thought we were only natives, and so they didn't bother us to buy lumpy looking statuettes or postcards or rhinestone combs. The open-faced shops sent out shafts of light that were so dulled by the haze that they looked strained, and I can't exactly explain but it was sort of cozy and nice in spite of the dampness, and pretty too.

After a little time my sick friend turned. "You must get on," he stated.

"I'm not in any hurry," I answered.

"But it's getting late for you," he said as he looked down. I liked his face even then. Later,

Leslie said he wasn't handsome, and she said that the only two really handsome men she had ever seen were Ben Forbes (*and he has a pink wart on his chin!*) and Wallace Reid; but I think that kind eyes and a good mouth and a firm chin make a man handsome, and I stick to it that Sam *is*.

"I'm going to take you home," I stated, very seriously, and my friend laughed and then I knew him; for I had heard him laugh in that happy, quick way as he leaned out of a studio window that looked into our court and answered the sallies of Gino, who was rubbing his brasses down below.

"You are a dear and kind little soul," he said after the laugh faded, "but that tickled me; you are about four feet long, aren't you? And I'm a perfect telegraph pole, and pretty heavy. Anyway—" he had grown very serious, "do you think I am going to let you bother any more with me? You've wasted too much time now, and—what's more important—one of your lovely cream puffs—" and after he said that he looked at the bag again, looked away quickly, and swallowed hard.

I knew I had to do *something* to make him let me help him, because I could see that he was stiff-necked, and that he intended to be independent, and so I said—and rather softly because I was embarrassed—"But I owe you *lots*—"

He said, "How come?" and turned again to look down at me, and I told him, and as I told him he listened hard, and once—of course I must have been mistaken—I thought his eyes filled.

"Well," he said, after I finished, "*Well,*" and then, "*You poor little chap!*"

"Oh," I said, "I'm all right now, but you see you helped me when I was unhappy and so it's no more than fair that I should take you home, and—and—share my cream puffs—"

Then an old lady who carried a scaldino—which is a funny little stove that stands on legs and looks like a stewpot—came out of the door, and we stood up.

"Can you move?" I asked anxiously.

"You bet I *can,*" I heard, "I feel *great!* Come on, little friend—"

"You take my arm," I ordered, and he did. And he insisted upon carrying the umbrella too, which we didn't open, and every once in a while he leaned down so he could look under my hat, and then he would say, "You say you *aren't* homesick any more?"

And I'd say, "No, not any more—"

And he'd answer with, "That's right. . . . You mustn't be unhappy, you know! You just mustn't be *that!*"

We walked in an awfully funny way, because his stride was miles long, and of course mine had

to be short. And when he tried to shorten his stride, it made him teeter like a Japanese official—I know about these because our choral society gave *The Mikado* two years ago—while if I tried to accommodate my step to his I looked as if I were doing the bent knee walk the twins do, that lowers their bodies and shortens their legs and looks *awfully* funny; and they always do it back of Roberta when she is all dressed up and starts out to do her fancy calling.

So we hobbled and hitched along, and suddenly I laughed, and he laughed too, and then we were even better friends. It is strange, and very nice, I think, how laughter does this.

"My name is Sam Deane," he announced, after our laughter had trailed off into a silence that had lasted past two fruit stores and a wine shop, "what is yours, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Plain Jane Jones," I answered. "I think yours is a really *nice* name!" And then he told me that his wasn't half as nice as mine, which was mere kindness, because there is nothing romantic or fancy about Jane or Jones; but, as Father said, there could be no Clytemnestras in a flock that was handicapped by the last name *he* gave us!

Then we reached the corner that would take us to the row of houses that backed on our court, and here we turned, and as we neared his house I

"My name is Sam Deane," he announced.

kept getting more and more nervous, because I wanted to say something, and I didn't know how to say it. That is a feeling that most women do not understand, but it comes to me often.

Mr. Sam Deane helped me, because I think *he* wanted to say something that *he* couldn't say; anyway, we stood for quite a few minutes before his door, and then suddenly he said, "I *am* a dolt; I intend to see you around the block, of course; it's much too late for you to walk alone."

"You *are* just what you said you were," I interrupted. "I've spent an hour getting you here; it would be too silly for you to try that! I'm going to take you up to your room, too—"

"No," he answered, "really, Little Miss Jane Jones, you're *not.* I'll call Gino. The other wouldn't do at *all!*" Then his tone changed and he ended with, "How am I ever going to thank you?"

"Oh, it was nothing," I answered, and I looked down at the spot between the bricks that I was poking with the umbrella I had just recaptured. He laughed, but not as I had ever heard him laugh before; this was a tight, short laugh that didn't seem as if it had much mirth in it.

"Well, just as you will have it," he stated, "but —*I know.*"

"Mr. Deane," I said, "will you *please* take my cream puffs?"

He said, "*No,* my dear." Said it with his chin set and his head high.

I waited for a moment, looking up at him. "Won't you *please?*" I said, and I was perfectly amazed; my voice shook.

"You know I'm hungry, don't you?" he asked stiffly.

I nodded, "That's the reason I'm trying to give them to you," I explained. "I don't need them; Miss Julianna always gives us nice meals, and I only got them for diversion. I thought I'd eat them coming home because Mr. Paggi makes me nervous, but I'd forgotten my best suit, and that I had to carry an umbrella—and that made eating them difficult—" I paused, and looked up to see that my new friend wasn't looking over my head any more, but down at me.

"It's a devil of an agent who is making my trouble," he confided, "he gave me an order, and now—try as hard as I may—I can't make the thing suit him; and I can't tell now whether he's right, or whether he wants to revoke the order and is doing it by finding fault. You see, I can't see the thing straight any more—"

Suddenly I thought of Mr. Wake, who knows a great deal about pictures, and I felt that he would help Sam Deane; I was *sure* of it. It made me smile. "I *know,*" I said, "that things will change soon—"

Then Sam Deane said something that was kind, but of course nonsense. He said, "They have changed; you—you've made them—"

I poked the hole between the bricks after I said thank you, and then I realized that it must be getting late, and that I would be late for dinner if I didn't hurry, so I held out the bag.

"*I would take them from you,*" I said, and after a second of hesitation he took them. He didn't thank me at all; but he clamped the bag of cream puffs under his arm—he must have had to scrape them off the paper when he came to eat them—and then he put both his hands around my un-umbrellaed hand, and for a minute held it very tightly.

"I—can't say anything," he said in a funny, jerky way.

"Oh, that's all right," I answered. And he laughed a little, and he did that in a jerky way too. Then he said, "You turn on your light, and switch it on and off three or four times, will you, when you get in? I'll want to know that you're all right."

"I will," I promised.

"And look here, you won't be homesick, will you?"

"No," I promised. Then I said "Good-night," and he said "Good-night," and I went off down the street. At the corner I looked back to see him

still on the step and watching me, and that made me nervous, because people catch cold easily when they aren't well, and he should have known it. And furthermore, there wasn't the least necessity of his watching me, because I had often been out later than that by myself and I was quite safe.

In the Pension I hurried to my room, and took off my hat and coat and switched my light off and on several times as I had promised, and from across the court I had a fast-flashed answer.

Then I went out to dinner where Mr. Hemmingway was telling of his first trip in a yawl—whatever that is—which had been in the spring of 1871, or 1872, he had a fearful time remembering which; and where Miss Bannister was telling of the crumpets that they had had for tea when the gentry came during the years of her girlhood; and where Miss Meek was making sniff-prefaced remarks about people who made their money overnight in America—this was for Leslie's benefit—and where Beata was to be seen, again with eyelids that were puffed from tears.

After dinner as I played Canfield in the dining room with Miss Meek looking on and saying, "That's the way to it! Now smack the queen on the king jolly quick!" I thought of all the unfinished stories I had around me.

First there was Miss Sheila, whose love story had been unhappy.

Then there was Mr. Wake, and I felt certain that he had a long story tangled in the years that he had passed.

Leslie came next; Leslie who had cared enough for this Ben Forbes man to come to Florence in order to show him that she was *not* what he had said she was.

And Viola, who for some reason was making a pretense of studying when she really hated work.

Beata followed, Beata whose tie-knitting had ceased, and who cried as she did her dusting or scraped the carrots.

And I had added, just that evening, another one, and that was Sam Deane, who was hungry, and who was fighting, and who needed help.

All of them had stories and all of the stories seemed most interesting, to me. I, I realized, hadn't any story, but I didn't really need it, while there was so much activity and romance for every one around me.

Before I undressed, I wrote Mr. Wake a long letter about Sam Deane, and I said that I was sorry to trouble him, but that I did want his help, and that Sam Deane lived on the third floor of the building that backed ours, which would be good for reducing Mr. Wake's stomach. And then I signed myself most affectionately and admiringly his, and closed and addressed and stamped my letter.

Then I got Beata to take it out. I found her sitting before the wall shrine and looking at it dully.

"It must go *quickly*—" I said. And she said something of sweethearts and love, which was, of course, all off, but I hadn't the time nor ability to explain and so I let it go; and then I went back to my room and undressed and went to bed.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DARK CLOUDS

THE days that followed were dark and gloomy; the cold crept inside and every one was uncomfortable and almost every one cross. Sometimes I think that the weather really makes all the history, and certainly if it hadn't been damp Leslie wouldn't have been sick with a cold; and if she hadn't had a cold she wouldn't have quarreled with Viola; and if Viola and she hadn't quarreled, Viola wouldn't have told Miss Meek all about Leslie's heart affair; and if Viola hadn't confided it to Miss Meek, then Viola and Leslie might have patched up their difference long before they did. All this happened in the course of two dragging, rough-surfaced days, during which no one was happy. And I contend that the strain started from the clouded skies, and the chill which crept in to cling to the floors and live boldly in the passages.

Friday afternoon I slipped a slicker over my everyday suit, which is a belted tweed, and pulled a plain little felt hat low, and started out. It was raining miserably, but I thought that I could shake

off the queer, unpleasant weight that I felt inside, if I walked hard, for I had done that before. But everything conspired to hinder me.

I suppose every one has pictures that they collect without meaning to; funny, little pictures that live in their minds and spring up at odd moments; and pictures that sometimes come, with time, to bring back no more than the *feeling* of the long forgotten day when the particular picture hung itself up inside.

Cats that step reluctantly and pick up their feet in their wet-hating, curly way, will, I know, always take me back to the damp air of that afternoon when I walked down past the fish market to the Piazza del Duomo, where the cobbles shone in the wet and reflected the bobbing umbrellas, and where, instead of the usual chattering crowds, there were empty spaces, which was bound to give a feeling of loneliness to any one who knew and loved the Florence of sunny days.

I went through this and down past the Loggia dei Lanzi, where there were no stalls or no hand trucks heaped with flowers, and then through the court-like street that divides the two upper floors of the big Uffizi Gallery, on under the little passageway that connects these, and then along the balustraded walk that overlooks the Arno.

It is lovely to walk by this river in the sunlight, because then there are women down below, on the

shallow strips of beach that crop up here and there, who wash clothes by beating them on stones *with* stones, and who sing and joke, or call scornful taunts at each other, as they work. But this day it was empty save for a little boy who sat in the stern of a moored boat and fished—I suppose with a bent pin on his string—just as his little American brother might do in my own land.

After I had walked toward the Grazia Bridge, and crossed the street to see something I thought pretty in one of the windows of the shops, I turned and went back toward the Ponte Vecchio, which means "The Old Bridge," and as I walked across this I considered what I would buy to take home to Mother, Father, Roberta and the twins.

I did this because the bridge is lined with little shops that have windows that twinkle from the gold and silver they hold and the gleaming of all the stones I had ever heard of and many, many more.

Then—and with the weighted, unpleasant feeling still with me—I turned in the direction that would take me home, and hurried as quickly as I could because the rain was coming down faster and it was coming on the slant.

The people in the shops I passed were idle, and the women huddled up with the stewpot little stoves they call scaldinoes tucked under their feet and skirts. They still sat in their doorways al-

though a real storm raged, and I learned that day, truly, that most of Italy does live in the street.

As I turned in the Via Nazionale, which is our street and becomes the Piazza Indipendenza as soon as it reaches the park, I saw, through an open door, a piece of stove pipe that stood on four legs and had a curling little chimney at one end, and that made me smile a little, for the original pattern was invented by an American sea captain who wintered in Florence and almost died of the cold; and the stoves—which Mr. Wake says get much hotter than the infernal regions ever *could* —are called "American pigs."

I found the hall very, very dark, and after I had climbed the stairs and got in the Pension corridor I found that that also was dark, and then Miss Julianna came along, switched on the lights, and through that I heard Beata's story.

"She is ashamed," said Miss Julianna, "to have you see the *cry on her cheek.*"

I said I was sorry, as Beata, who had been sitting in the half light by a table, lowered her head and looked away.

"It is sad," Miss Julianna agreed, "the good girl, Beata! She loves very much, and also has love give to her, but has not the dowry! And you know here it is necessary."

"Can't she earn it?" I asked.

"She had save some, but her small brother,

Giuseppe, walks of the crutch, and could be made well; for him she give her money that was saved. No, Beata?" she ended, after adding a string of Italian that was too quickly spoken for me to follow.

Beata nodded, and *she* spoke quickly, and then she sobbed.

"She say," said Miss Julianna, "that she is happy and would do again, but her heart, poor little foolish one! Her heart go on loving when it should now *stop!* It is *sad!* No, Signorina?"

I thought it was! And I went over by Beata and patted her shoulder. It did seem unfair for her to be unhappy, because she was always *so* pleasant and kind.

"The Signorina Par*reesh* is more bad of the throat," went on Miss Julianna; "I went in; she say, 'How glad to die, I would be!' also you have the letter—*here*—"

I took the letter with a good deal of hope that trickled off into nothing as I saw dear Miss Sheila's writing. It had been over a week since I had heard from home, and it seemed much longer than it was. Of course I was glad to hear from Miss Sheila, but I needed a letter from Mother, all full of an account of the things the twins had done, and who was calling on Roberta that night, and who was sick, and how many appendixes Daddy had taken out, and what they'd had for

dinner, and how the geraniums were doing, and how Marshal Foch—who is our canary—was almost through molting.

That was what I *needed* and so I had to swallow hard several times before I opened Miss Sheila's letter—I had thought *surely* the letter was from Mother—and after I opened it I swallowed harder, for the twins had contracted diphtheria—as they did everything, together—and Miss Sheila said that Mother wouldn't be able to write for some time. Mother had telegraphed her and asked her to write me and to keep me informed.

Well, after I stood around a minute looking down at the page the way you do when it holds something you'd rather not see, I went along the corridor to my room, and in there, I sat down in the cold, and wondered whether the twins were very sick, and then I thought of the times I'd been cross to them, and then I wondered whether Mother could get it—and I had to swallow *awfully* hard over that, and then—I thought of Father. And I got up very quickly and squared my shoulders, and took off my coat, and put it over a chair to dry, and hung my hat on the bed post, and went off down the corridor to Leslie's room, for Father had *no use for people who are not sports.* It helped me to remember that.

Leslie was sitting up with her feet in a tub of

hot water, and she had on a chin strap that tied on top of her head in a funny little bow, and she was crying. I was sorry for her, and sorrier for myself, and we were both miserable, but she looked funny. I saw it even then.

"Always—wear this when—I'm alone," she said thickly and in jerks. (She was talking about the rubber strap that was jacking up her chin.) "Mother—has a double—chin and—*the blood just drains from my heart when I look*—every time *I look at her!*"

"I wouldn't worry about it to-day," I advised. Then I asked her whether I could get her anything. She shook her head, and then she spoke.

"Viola told Miss Meek everyting *I'd ever told her,*" she said, "all about Ben Forbes saying I was idle, and a p-parisite. Don't you think that was mean?"

I did. And I said so.

She sniffed, and then suddenly, she hid her face in her arm and began to cry hard.

"I wish—" she whimpered, "I were—*dead*—"

And then I got *her* story.

This Benjamin Forbes had lived next door to the Parrishes in New York, and he did until Leslie was eighteen, which was the year before she "came out," (whatever that is) anyway, he used to help Leslie with her lessons, and take her to

the Zoo and riding in the park, and he bought her candy, (the hard, healthy variety that comes in jars and is no good, but the only sort she was permitted to eat, and she said she appreciated the fact that his *intentions* were kind) and he even used to go to the dentist's with her while she was having her teeth straightened.

Well, she said that he never thought of her except as a little girl, but that she *adored* him, and that one night when she was at a fudge party at boarding school—and she was only sixteen at the time—when the other girls were discussing and planning their husbands, she, Leslie, suddenly knew what sort she wanted, and that the sort was *Ben.*

And she placed him on an altar then, (I quote; for Leslie's style is *not* mine) and she never wavered once although she had much attention paid to her, and had had two and a half proposals —the half coming from the fact that her father plunked right in the center of the third one, and evicted the suitor, who left in such agitation that he went without his hat. (Leslie kept it for a souvenir) However, to get on, Mr. Forbes' younger brother wasn't strong, and so Mr. Forbes bought a ranch and went out there, and he liked it and they stayed.

He came back after four years, and offered to take Leslie to the *Hippodrome,* which showed he

didn't know she had grown up, but she suggested a Russian play instead, and he took her there, but she said she could see he didn't enjoy it, and that he was not pleased with her having matured and that he rather resented it, and he didn't seem to know how to talk to her, and he acted baffled, and she said that, as he groped, and unconsciously showed his disappointment, *every dream and hope of hers was scattered in the dust.* (I am quoting Leslie again) Well, he left after he had been in New York a week, but the night before he left Leslie asked him frankly why he didn't like her, (she told him that she could *see* he didn't) and then he admitted that he was a little disappointed.

"I like girls," he said, "who can work, and who don't make playing their only work. All you can do is go to teas and poppycock parties, now isn't it?" (She said he was gentle, but that he told her all he felt)

"You can't," he went on, "even play the piano as well as you did at fourteen; you can't keep house, can you?" (And Leslie couldn't) "And it seems to me," he ended, "that you are content to be a pretty little parasite, and that disappoints me."

And his saying that sent her to Florence, and it started, she said, a ceaseless ache in her heart. And the ache grew too large to keep hidden, and Leslie confided in Viola; and Viola, in an effort to

make Miss Meek realize that Leslie was away out of her natural placing, told Miss Meek that Leslie's broken heart had led her to seek the solace of work in these humble surroundings. And Viola's talking to Miss Meek was made by the fact that Viola hated sickness, couldn't bear being with people who were sick, and—had to talk to some one.

In that way the confidence became a triangle, and it ended as such triangles usually do—where it started—for Miss Meek came in to Leslie's room and boomed out, "Oho, Miss Smarty! The Queen didn't rule every one now, did she? And I'll say jolly lucky for the Forbes man at that!" (Miss Meek dislikes Leslie)

And when Viola appeared later, and said, from the doorway, "Darling, is there *anything* I can do for you?" Leslie answered, "You can *try* to keep your mouth shut!" and then I think they had a row, although Leslie says that people of her station *never* row. It seemed like one to my simple nature, though, and during the course of it Leslie told Viola that her people were "nobodies" and that Mrs. Parrish hadn't been "at all pleased" when she heard of Viola's going, and that she, Leslie, now knew it was a "climber's scheme"; and then Viola said that Leslie considered herself more important than she was, and that money wasn't *anything,* and that now she knew that so-

ciety was a "hollow sham," since people like Leslie could masquerade as paragons or paramounts, or something like that—I sort of forget—in it.

And then they both cried, and Viola slammed the door as she left, and that started *it*—which was a feud that lasted until Viola had a trouble that was big enough to make even Leslie forgive her the things that she had said, on that rainy day that backed so many unpleasant happenings.

After I left Leslie, I went to my own room and stood by the window looking across the court. . . . There was no light in my artist's window and there had been no sign of any life in the big room since the evening that followed my taking him home.

Mr. Wake had sent me a little note that read: "Sam Deane is all right now. Will report on Saturday." But that didn't tell me whether long Sam Deane had gone on to another part of the country or to another land or was still in Florence, and, somehow, it didn't seem to satisfy me.

I wondered a lot as I stood there, and I realized that I had hoped—really without knowing it—that I'd see that tall Deane man again. But his rooms were empty and dark, and it was raining, and a swinging sign somewhere in the neighborhood protested in high shrill squeaks as the wind pushed it back and forth, and the twins had diphtheria, and I had been so cross to them sometimes, and they

were *so* dear, and poor Beata had lost her sweetheart, and Leslie was crying, and Viola angry and miserable—and—I *did* want to wander out into our big, yellow-walled kitchen and say "What are you going to have for supper, Mother?"—and to know that they were *all*—every one of them—all right.

The court was growing very dark, and the shadows were gloomy. The rain was caught by a swooping wind and swished against the windows and ran down the panes in rivulets. And just after that the Pension bell jangled loudly, and I thought of the twins and of cablegrams, and when, after a long, long tightly stretched moment or two, some one tapped on my door, I had to moisten my lips before I could even half whisper, "*Come—*"

And then—

Oh, well—there is always, *always,* blue back of the gray! But somehow, when one is far from home and it rains hard, you sort of forget it!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A PATCH OF BLUE SKY

IT was Beata who had tapped on my door, and after my weak-kneed "Come—" she opened it and came in, and as she crossed the floor to reach me she held out a lavender striped box that was tied with silver cord. I took it, and it did seem to me that the silver cord would never come untied—I suppose because I was so excited—but at last I got the knot out and the cover off, and I saw a bunch of big purple violets that smelled of earth and of their own soft, sweet perfume. I couldn't believe they were for *me!* I had never had violets sent to *me* before.

But they were for me, and after Beata, who had lingered from interest and frankly looked on, said, "Signorina, *la carte!*" I picked up the envelope that was in the bottom of the box, and read on it,

"For
"Miss 'Plain Jane Jones' "

and then I tore that open and read the letter. It was from Sam Deane and it said:

"DEAR LITTLE GOOD SAMARITAN:
"Lots of luck has come to me—and may I say, bless

you? *I think I must!* I can't return the cream puffs, for somehow or other I mislaid the ones you loaned me, and I'm afraid I can't match them.

"I would like to say lots, but your Mr. Wake is looking over my shoulder and telling me that you are a dear little girl—and don't I know it?—but, dragons or not, I am going to be your friend, if you will let me.

"Mr. Wake wonders whether you will go walking with him, Saturday. He says he will call for you at three and return you when his waist line is sufficiently reduced.

"I can't say thank you for all you have done for me; some day I will try to tell you how I feel, and I will show you always, by being

"Your sincere and devoted friend,

"SAM DEANE."

I liked that letter.

"Beata," I said, "aren't they *lovely?*"

"Si, *si,* Signorina!" said Beata, and she nodded and nodded, and her eyes shone just as if the violets were hers. And then I went to stand before the glass, and place them the way girls do, and I was so excited that I stuck the violet pin right through my corset into my stomach, *but nothing mattered!* I was just *awfully* happy! I didn't know that violets would make you feel that way, but these did. And Mr. Hemmingway thought they were beautiful, and tried very hard to recall the first year he ever "sent a lady a posy" (but he couldn't remember because he couldn't remember which year he had bought a tan and white

striped waistcoat in the Strand or Ludgate Circus, of course he couldn't remember where, and the waistcoat buying prefaced the posy giving) and Miss Meek said that *some* man had more sense than most of the jolly idiots, and Miss Bannister asked me who sent them, and let me answer without telling me it was one of her deaf days, which showed that every one felt kind and interested.

And so dinner passed, and after dinner I sat with Leslie a little while and helped her get in bed; and then brushed my hair while Viola sat in my room and told about how Leslie's grandfather had started to make his fortune in pickles—and she seemed to be glad of it, I couldn't see why—and then she squeezed my hand, and said that she was sorry that she had been so fearfully busy during the first two weeks, and that we must see lots of each other now—I suppose because she had fought with Leslie, I know I hadn't changed any in that short time—and then she left and so ended that day.

Saturday was clear and everything was washed and clean by the rain that had fallen so steadily and long. All the roofs were a brighter red and the gray and tan houses lightened and the sunlight was dazzling, and even the song of Florence—which is made by the many, many church and monastery bells that mix, and tangle, and float across the city to make pretty, skippy tunes—even

this song seemed freshened by all the scrubbing that the city had undergone.

I got up quite early and went to my window to look out. Gino was whistling as he swept around his back door, and talking to his parrot that he had brought out with the stand to which it was chained. . . . And I looked above him at the big window through which I had so often watched my artist, and I realized that Mr. Wake would tell me about him that day. . . . And then Beata came to call out her gentle, "Buon giorno, Signorina! Acqua calda!"

And I answered, and took in the tall, steaming, brass pitcher and began to bathe and dress.

I practised a lot in the morning, and brushed my best suit, which I thought *ought* to back my violets, and then came lunch, and then getting into outdoor duds; and at last the Pension bell jangled as it swung to and fro in answer to a touch from downstairs, and I knew that Mr. Wake had come. I went out to the head of the stairs, as soon as I heard the bell ring, and called, "Is it you, Mr. Wake?" And, when I was answered as I wanted to be, I hurried down.

It was *very* good to see him, and I stood in the doorway with him for several minutes as I told him about the twins, (he was sure they weren't very sick) and of Miss Sheila's promising to write me regularly about how things went on, and

of Leslie's bad cold. And then I asked about my friend, Sam Deane.

"Able to take a *little* nourishment," Mr. Wake answered, which I found later was a joke. "I have quite a story for you," he went on, "suppose we start out and talk on the road. Shall we?"

I nodded, and then blinked as I always did when I stepped from the dark, gray-walled hall out into the brilliant middle hours of an Italian day. It was cheerful outside. The cats—and there are millions of them in Florence; every one sets out food for them, and no one ever harms them; I think they were blessed, and so protected, by some Saint beloved of the Florentines—the cats sat sunning themselves and washing their ears and whiskers, or they strolled without hesitation, and planted their feet surely, which shows how quickly the sun had worked at drying things. The old ladies who always sit in doorways and call to each other, huddled less over their scaldinoes, and little boys with bare knees ran through the paths in the Piazza Indipendenza or spun their tops on the pavement on our side of the street. Of course officers walked slowly, and little knots of soldiers from the ranks collected on corners to talk, and pretty Italian girls fluttered past. Every one seemed glad to be out, and happy. It was pleasant.

"Well?" I prompted after we had turned a

corner, and into a street that was, from the white walls, simply ablaze with sun. "Where *is* Mr. Deane?"

"At the Villa Rossa, now, I think," Mr. Wake answered.

"*Your* house?" I said in surprise.

"Yes, my dear. . . . And very glad I am to have him. . . . A nice boy, a very *fine* boy, and I needed some one to play the banjo in my garden. . . . I have fountains that look very well in the moonlight, and a climbing rose tree that has covered one side of my house, and I have marble benches, and everything that goes with romance, and—not a hint of the real thing. All wrong it was! And so I am glad to have this troubadour from Texas—"

"I called him that too," I confessed, "I used to like to hear him play—"

"And so do I," Mr. Wake responded, "and I imagine he plays remarkably badly. There must be ears of love as well as eyes of love . . . . You like him?"

"Oh, very *much!*" I stated. Mr. Wake smiled down at me then—I didn't know quite why—but I liked it; it gave me something of the same warm feeling that came from the almost piercing sunlight, and then Mr. Wake took my hand and drew my arm through his as he had done before.

"The devil take Signora Grundy," he said, "I

have no use for her at all, and never had! And how—" (he stopped and coughed and finished with a jerk) "is the fairy godmother?"

"Very well," I answered.

"Some day," he said, "you'll describe her to me? Faith, and I never will get enough of some fairy tales!"

"I will," I promised. And then Mr. Wake went on to tell me of Sam Deane, and I was glad to hear his story.

Sam Deane, who was twenty-eight, Mr. Wake said, had won a traveling scholarship from a well known art school in the middle west. This had meant a year in Paris and a thousand dollars allowance beside, and it was given as a reward for exceptionally good work.

Well, Sam Deane had come to Paris and worked his year, and then he decided that he wanted what Mr. Wake said Sam termed "A go at Rome and Florence," so he packed his suitcase, tucked his banjo under his arm and walked most of the way to Rome. And Mr. Wake put in the statement that Sam was the sort who could get what he really wanted, and I said I thought so too, and then Mr. Wake smiled down at me again in his very pleasant, twinkling, warming way which led me to believe that the weather made him feel well, too.

Sam Deane did well in Rome where he looked up

some of his fellow workers, and shared a beautiful studio that was set high in a bit of the old Roman City wall. He got some orders and saw the place, and he stayed there quite a while and began to feel that Fortune was really fond of him.

But in Florence! Oh, that was a different story!

The haughty city turned her back on him, and she closed her long, slim fingers round her gold. And Mr. Wake said that Sam had been duped by the worst scoundrel of an agent that ever lived, and that there was nothing wrong with the picture Sam was copying, not in the *manner,* Mr. Wake stated. (He said the subject was ghastly, I don't know why, I thought the little boy would have made a pretty picture, but when you are educated in Art I don't believe you want them to be pretty) Anyway, the agent kept putting Sam off, and making him redo his work, for he had a clause in his contract order that let him do this. And Mr. Wake said that in this way Signor Bianco usually reduced his slaves to such despair that they finally let their work go to him for half its real worth.

"Now—" Mr. Wake ended, as we drew near a long building that had medallions all along the front of it, made of the same sort of ware that I had seen in the fountain up on the Via Nazion-

ale, "Now I'm going to take a hand . . . . And I know that with a little boosting and a little advice the young man will *get along!* He has the real stuff in him. Some of his sketches made me think of the early work of Davies. Going to keep him with me until he gets a hold, and longer if he'll stay. Nice boy, *fine* boy. . . . Look ahead of you, Jane, my child. . . . You see the round, blue and white plaques up there? Copied all over the world, those little white babies with their legs wrapped in swaddling clothes. They were made by della Robbia back in the fourteenth century."

I thought that was wonderful, and so different from our modern art, because if you were to hang up a Henry Hutt picture, even indoors, I don't believe it would last fifty years.

I said this to Mr. Wake, who entirely agreed with me. Then he told me that one of the reasons that the Italians made such beautiful things was that they took a long time to doing it. A man named Orcagna who is dead—it is discouraging to think that every one who is great seems to *have* to be dead a long, long time—this man worked thirty years on a shrine that is in a church called Or San Michele. (It is a *beautiful* shrine of marble and silver and precious stones and lovely little carved figures) And Giotto died before his tower was finished—it looks like a slim lily where it stands by the side of the big fat Duomo—and Ra-

phael was killed by working too hard over his pictures, and wasn't allowed to marry because the Pope thought he should give all of his time to his work, which seems so sad to me. . . . I kept thinking for a long time, after Mr. Wake told me that, of how Raphael's sweetheart must have felt when Raphael was buried at thirty-seven, for that isn't so very old, after all.

As we stood there talking I saw Viola coming toward us, and after I had spoken quickly to Mr. Wake, I called to her, because I knew she was lonely.

"This is Viola," I said to Mr. Wake, "her last name is Harris-Clarke, you say them both," and then I added, to Viola, "We're going to see this church. Do you want to go with us?"

"But how charming!" she murmured, "and this is Mr. Wake, of whom I have heard most *pleasant* things?"

Mr. Wake bowed from the waistline, but he didn't seem especially pleased, or at all excited over the things she had heard of him and that did surprise me a lot!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

STORIES, MUSIC AND TEA

THAT afternoon was pleasant, but I don't think that's the reason I remember it so clearly. A good many pleasant sight-seeing walks followed that have grown a little dim, even now. I think it fastened itself by my beginning to see Viola, and a side of her through which she was soon to hurt herself so cruelly. I discovered the side through a little comment of hers on a painting made by Andrea del Sarto, an artist who painted in Florence a good deal in the fourteen hundreds. They didn't have any electric signs then, and so they used paint instead, and they spread this over the churches—both inside and out—because they were old fashioned and religious.

After Viola joined us Mr. Wake said, "The building we face, the one that has the della Robbia babies smiling down on you from the front of it, is a hospital for foundlings—little children whose parents die, or for some reason or other don't want them—and it is called the 'Innocenti,' which means The Innocents, and there, years ago—probably some time in 1452—a little baby who was

later called Leonardo da Vinci, found a home. It was rather well that he did, wasn't it? And now shall we go into the church?"

"Let's," I answered, after I had taken a long look at the stern looking building that holds inside so much that is lovable. And then we went into Santissima Annunziata and after we had looked at the glittering Chapel of the "Annunciation Virgin" and some paintings Mr. Wake told us were wonderful, we went on into the cloisters.

As we got about half way in, Mr. Wake put his hand on my arm, drew me to a standstill, and Viola followed suit.

"Look above the door," said Mr. Wake, and we did, to see a pretty picture of Joseph, and Mary, and a little boy, who was the small Christ. . . . I liked it very much because it was simple, and it made you feel *near* it. Joseph was leaning on a sack of grain, and Mr. Wake said, when he spoke, that it was called "The Madonna of the Sack" because of that.

"But," he said, "the great story lies behind the pretty face of the model; for Mary, up there, was Andrea's ambitious, money-loving wife. . . . She crept into all his pictures, for she was his model, and she made him work like mad to paint them, for she was always wanting the things that do not count, and the things that do not live; and the money for his pictuures could buy these things

for her. . . . And while he worked, she played and wore the fine garments that the silk-makers guild wove for her. . . . There are millions of her, aren't there? Poor blind, foolish women!" he ended.

"But," said Viola, "don't men like to have women interested in their work? I'm sure that my own dear Father is *stimulated* by *my* need for pretty things."

"Surely," agreed Mr. Wake, "but to be pushed beyond strength and to be whined at continually is quite a different thing. . . . In this case it proved to be the killing of the golden goose, for Andrea del Sarto did not live to a great age—he died at forty-five—and his wife lived on alone without her beauty and the love of Andrea, and lived long beyond him. . . . It is said that one day, many years after Andrea died, an artist who was copying that moon shaped picture up there was startled by a touch on his shoulder, and he looked up to see an old, browned, shriveled hag, who smiled down at him a little bitterly. 'I see,' she said, 'that you are copying the picture of me that my husband painted?—' Then perhaps," Mr. Wake added, "she went in and sent a little prayer up through the dim ceiling for all of her sisters—gone and to come—who think more of money and things than they do of love or the comfort of their beloved."

We went in again after that, but I wasn't much interested in the rest of the church, and it was so cold inside and out of the sun that I was glad when we stepped outside again and made our way toward the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele where there was to be a concert given by one of the military bands. There was a cluster of gaily uniformed band men in its center, and hundreds and hundreds of people around them, and at the edges of the square people sitting at the tables of the open air, outdoor cafés, drinking and eating whatever they had ordered. It was very *different* from anything I'd ever seen, and so full of brightness and color and a deep, thick sense of enjoyment that I don't know how to describe it. But people seemed keyed up by the music, and when the band master would stand up before his men and wave his baton, every one grew tense, and when the music started they listened *hard.*

"Suppose," said Mr. Wake, after we had pushed by two of the Bersaglieri, (who are the sharp-shooter soldiers that have cock feathers drooping from one side of their always tilted, theatrical looking hats) "we go sit down, and see whether—if we look very wistful—some waiter won't come along, and take an order—"

"*Delightful,*" said Viola, who had been getting more and more airy as she was more and more impressed with Mr. Wake.

"I'd like it," I said, "I'm always hungry, but how about your stomach?"

"My *dear!*" Viola put in, in a shocked aside, but I paid no attention because it was no time to quibble. Mr. Wake was taking me out *primarily for his stomach,* and because he wanted to *reduce it,* and I didn't think it would be fair to sit and eat and tempt him.

After Viola said "My *dear!*" Mr. Wake laughed, and patted my shoulder.

"Always beginning to reduce *next week,*" he said; "like *Alice in Wonderland,* 'jam to-morrow and jam yesterday, but *never jam to-day!*' And don't you think a little fat softens age? Suits my type?—There's a table ahead of us, grab it, Jane, before the gentleman with the many whiskers sits down and pretends he is a piece of sage brush—"

He did look like sage brush, but the wind blew me to the table Mr. Wake wanted before it landed the rough, hairy looking person there, and Viola and Mr. Wake followed and settled. And then I had my first taste of outdoor eating, which is very foreign, and which I like *so* much!

Viola and I had strong, bitter chocolate with whipped cream on it and French pastries and little cakes with nuts in them, and Mr. Wake had wine and crackers. And just as our waiter brought the order to us, the band struck up "Pizzicato Sylvia" and unless you have heard an Italian band

play something shortly and sharply, with a snapping, staccato touch, you have yet to hear *music*—real *music*—

Oh, how I came to love those concerts that were scheduled twice a week, all winter long, in one or another of the public squares!

I couldn't eat, I could just *listen*. And Mr. Wake smiled at me, and once he put his hand over mine, and I turned my hand until my fingers could squeeze his. And then I drew a deep breath and shook my head because the music made me feel that way. And then the band stopped, and every one was very quiet for a second, and then they clapped and after that laughter and talk rose with a perfect whir.

"Wasn't that *fine?*" I said, as Viola said, "*Enchanting,*" and some one who had been standing back of me for some moments, leaned down and said softly, "How do you do, to-day, little Miss Jones?"

It was my Sam Deane!

I was startled, but awfully glad to see him, although the idea of thanking him for those violets before every one made me feel cold and frightened and stiff.

"Miss Harris-Clarke, this is Mr. Sam Deane," said Mr. Wake, "whom I am proud to present to you—"

"Delightful," Viola murmured in her smooth way, and then Sam bowed and drew up a chair.

"Will the bottomless pit have something to eat?" asked Mr. Wake. And Sam Deane grinned at him, and then he said he might *consider* it.

"What did you draw?" he asked of me, and I told him, and he ordered what I had had.

"I want to write you a little note," I said.

"By jings, I *want* you to," he answered, and he looked at me and smiled in a very kind way. I don't believe there is a nicer man than Sam Deane! I liked him right off, and I've never stopped once since.

"No one ever sent me any before," I said in an aside, which was easy, because Mr. Wake had begun to talk to Viola about the Uffizi Gallery and the Belli Arti, which is another gallery.

"What was the matter with the boys?" Sam asked.

"My sister," I said, "is *really* attractive, and *she* always gets them. I like them *very* much, and I was so *excited* I could hardly get the box open. And I'd just heard that the twins were sick too, and the violets helped me a *lot.*"

He didn't answer, but he sat looking down at me and smiling, and I felt as if he would understand my clumsy thanking him. "I thank you *ever* so much!" I ended.

He shook his head, "Nothing," he answered, "it was absolutely nothing. I wanted to buy the Pitti Palace and the Boboli gardens and give them to you, and throw in the Piazzale Michael Angelo for good measure . . . . Are you—are you going to let me be your good friend?"

"If you really *want* to be," I responded, and I meant it.

"I want it more than anything," he said, in an undertone, and then we were quiet.

"How are you?" I asked, after the silence had begun to seem strained.

"Never have been better," he answered. "Did you know Mr. Wake got me a sale for my boy picture straight off? He brought another agent in to see it and he took it. We broke the contract with my old agent. Mr. Wake said I could with safety. I don't know what to say to you. . . . Think of what you've *done* for me."

"Oh, no," I disagreed.

"Oh, *yes!*" he stated. Then the band began to play "the Blue Danube" and when I heard it I thought I had never heard waltz time before. . . . It rose and fell in the softest waves, with the first beat accented, until one felt as if one *must* sway with it.

It was a moment that I shall never forget. I don't know quite why it was so vivid. . . . But the great hushed crowd which was pierced by blue

uniforms, and the three-cornered hats of the carabinieri, and the look on the dark skinned faces and in the deep brown eyes, and the sun that slanted across all this to cover an old stone building with gold, and the people around the little tables, and Viola talking with Mr. Wake, and Sam Deane, looking at me in a kind way, struck into my heart to make a picture that will always be remembered.

When the music stopped, I said, "I don't know why I am so happy to-day—"

And Sam Deane said he was too, but he did know why, which of course was natural, for he had been close to starving and worried over work, and all his skies were cleared.

"I can't tell you," I said, "how glad I am that everything is all right for *you.*"

He didn't answer immediately, and he really didn't answer at all. He said, "Please keep *on* feeling that way," and I promised I would, and then we stood up, and made our way through the crowd to stand at the edge of it, and listen to a few more numbers before we went home.

And on the way—we loitered a little, for we were on the sunny side of the street, and that makes loitering easy—Mr. Wake told us about how Mr. Robert Browning had picked up a little yellow book, in one of the stalls outside of San Lorenzo—which was a church we passed—and how

this book made him write "The Ring and the Book." Viola said that she knew it almost word for word, but when Mr. Wake asked her how it started she couldn't seem to remember.

"If I recall," said Mr. Wake—and it was almost the last information he imparted, and after that we began to have a *fine* time—"if I recall correctly it started out with a very careless sounding few words; they are, I think, 'Do you see this ring?' And then, in the next paragraph, 'Do you see this little yellow book I hold in my hand?' . . . And the poem has lived! The artificial fades and drops away; the real and simple *roots*." (He looked at Viola then; I don't know why) "There is another poem," he went on, "that starts in somewhat the same manner and Jane will know it. That one begins with, 'Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light,' both of them intimately in the vernacular—"

I didn't know what "vernacular" meant, but I didn't have to admit it, because Viola put in one of her low-breathed, "*Fas*cinatings," and after that Mr. Wake was quiet until we reached the twisting stairs that led to the Pension Dante, when he and Sam Deane said good-by to us.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FLORENTINE WINTER

AFTER that first real walk and our outdoor tea, Viola, Mr. Wake, Sam Deane and I took a great many walks—always two a week—and I came to enjoy seeing the things I should see, and hearing about people whom I had considered of little importance because they were so dead. But Mr. Wake woke everything up, and shook the dust from all the old stories and made them live.

For instance, when we passed Dante's house he would say, "No use of stopping; Dante is over at the Pitti Palace talking to Cosimo de Medici this morning, and I see Gemma" (she was Dante's wife) "is busy in the back yard hanging up the wash," and then we'd all pretend we saw her, and walk on deciding as we walked, that it would be kinder to slip our cards under the door without ringing, and that we hadn't wanted to find them in, anyway. Mr. Wake made everything modern and *natural,* just like that!

He took us to the Pitti Palace, which, in 1440, Luca Pitti commissioned Brunelleschi to build for him. It was to be a palace more magnificent than the Riccardi Palace which belonged to the Medici;

and the citizens and Florentine corporations were so much interested that they aided him. It was so fine that it took years to build, which Mr. Wake proved when he said that in 1549 it was sold, without its roof, to Eleanor of Toledo, who was the wife of Cosimo.

From the Pitti Palace we went to the Uffizi Gallery; through a little narrow passage that runs from the Pitti across the upper story of the Ponte Vecchio—the old bridge—along the Arno for a block, and then turns into the great Uffizi that was built by Vasari in 1560 to '74 for the municipal government, and by the order of Cosimo I because he wanted to use the Palazzo Vecchio, which was then the municipal building, for his own home.

Mr. Wake said that a good many people try to look up the history of the Uffizi family, but he advised me not to try, and when I asked why not he told me that "Uffizi" means offices.

All this information was given in a way that made it seem quite palatable, and not at all like the information that one usually gets. I enjoyed even the history of the erecting of those great, strong buildings, and when it came to the families, I loved it. It was truly interesting to hear of the wars of the blacks and the whites, who were the opposed and warring factions in Florence of the Middle Ages, and Mr. Wake told of how they

planned their conquests in hidden ways or under the cover of black night; and of how the Medici power was overthrown; of a priest who was made so deep a sympathizer of the oppressed that he tried to stab Cosimo de Medici while he was at Mass, then of how Cosimo escaped this, and finally died in one of his peaceful country palaces which stands to-day just as it did then.

In the Uffizi, Mr. Wake asked me what I would look at if I were alone, and I said the pictures of wars and animals, and Sam took me around hunting these, while Viola stuck to Mr. Wake and admired the things that every one should admire.

One sunny day, we went to the Piazzale Michelangelo, which is a great, cleared space on the top of a hill on the south side of the Arno, riding up in a *tram* and walking slowly down a cypress shaded path upon which, at intervals, were the stations of the cross. At another time we walked out to see Andrea Del Sarto's last supper, which is in a tiny church way out in the outskirts of Florence, and is not often seen by the hurried kind of tourist who uses a guide.

Then we saw where well known people had lived —Thomas Hardy, (and he had had rooms right up near us) and so had George Eliot and Walter Savage Landor and the Brownings and dozens of others I have forgotten.

And of course we saw a little house where Boc-

caccio was supposed to have lived, and the place in front of Santa Maria Novella (a church) where he, Boccaccio, met seven lovely ladies, one morning in 1348, just after Mass, when the city lay stricken under the horror of the plague. Mr. Wake pointed Boccaccio out to us as we were coming home past the church, one bleak November afternoon, after a walk that had taken us to the churches on the South Side of the Arno.

"There," he said, "in claret colored doublet and hose is my friend Boccaccio! He swings a silken purse that has in it many ducats, and he tries with nonchalance to hide the horror and fear that lurk within his heart. . . . A serving man whines behind him. 'Master, master, we had best be going. . . . Two more have fallen in the way not a disc's throw from your excellency, and the streets are filled with death!'. . . But now—*now!*—Who are these, seven of them, coming out from Mass! Lovely ladies who greet Boccaccio as a friend, and whose eyes lose their look of fright for the fleeting second when first Boccaccio comes into vision and to mind—"

And then Mr. Wake—in his *seeing* way told us how that group and two more youths planned to go up to Boccaccio's villa which some think was close to Fiesole—the town that Florence warred upon so often—the proud, small town that frowned and sneered on Florence from her high

seat upon the hill. And Mr. Wake said that the next day—early—when the dew was on the grass and the sun yet gentle, Boccaccio's party started off, and made their trip in a short two hours; found the villa more charming than their modest host had promised and that there they settled.

And to fill time they told stories, which are, after all this time, being read. But Mr. Wake said—when *I* said that I'd like to read them, that the stories would be the kind of stories that would be told by people who evaded duty, and kited off by themselves to look out *for* themselves. And he said they were not exactly the reading he would recommend for *me*.

Viola had read them and so had Leslie. Both of those girls often made me feel very ignorant, but Sam said he liked me as I was, and that helped a great deal.

Leslie went with us only a few times, although I always asked her. But her quarrel with Viola was as intense as it had been the day when it started—although they did speak to each other, very coldly—and I think that kept Leslie from going, as well as the fact that she was irritated into disliking Mr. Wake by Viola's and my enthusiasm over him just at that time. She was nervous and edgy and unhappy, and disappointed from the toppling of her friendship with Mr. Ben Forbes. The Florence winter months, which are

filled with fog and a damp, increeping cold, left her physically uncomfortable too, and she had no real companion and the hard application to work was new to her; altogether now that I look back, I pity her. But all that came to Leslie did help her; I know that, and so I suppose that I am only wasting pity.

The second time we went walking, Leslie went with us, and she was very cool and crisp in her greeting to Mr. Wake, and she disagreed with him about his opinion of the Fra Angelico frescoes in a Monastery called San Marco, in a sharp way that wasn't at all nice.

After we got back from our walk and were settled at dinner, Viola, with a circumspect look at Leslie, said something about Mr. Wake's books, and I saw Leslie look up at her suddenly and piercingly. And before I went to bed she called me over to her room. She had on a layer of mud—it was some kind of Russian stuff that she put on to cleanse the pores—and it made her look like a mummy. I *had* to giggle.

"What is the cause of your mirth?" she asked coldly as she stopped brushing her hair.

"Well," I answered, "you look kind of funny."

She elevated her chin, and I think she gave me that cool stare with which she even occasionally subdues Miss Meek, but of course it couldn't get through her mud-pie finish.

"I want to know," she said after a second of comparative silence, during which she had slammed her little jars around on her bureau, and brushed her hair so hard that I thought she'd brush it all out, "whether it is true that Mr. Wake is a writer?"

"Why, yes," I answered, " 'Beautiful Tuscany,' 'Hill Roads,' 'Old Roman Byways' and lots more were written by him."

It seemed to irritate her. "It would *seem* to me," she confided, "that you would naturally *mention* it!"

I didn't see why, but I didn't say so. I just picked up a button hook and wiggled it around in my hands, the way you do when you have nothing to do but feel uncomfortable.

"You lack finish, and are as gauche as any one I *ever* knew," she went on. I didn't know just what she meant by that, but I knew I didn't like it.

"Don't you know that when you introduce people," she questioned, "you should give some idea of the—the standing of each person so that—that they may know whom they shall be *nice* to?"

I shook my head.

"Well, you *do*," she snapped, "and if you have any more people to present to me, I want to *know* about them. . . . I positively snapped at this Mr. Wake—I am fearfully humiliated over it!—and

just a *word* from you would have saved me." (She slammed a bureau drawer shut until everything on the bureau top rattled), "I didn't imagine he *could* be anybody, because Viola Harris-Clarke raved so—"

"He was my friend in any case," I said, because I was getting mad, "and if you'd remembered that and been kind, you'd have spared both of us. I was ashamed of you—Mr. Wake was being kind to us, and you were rude to him without any reason for being so."

"*You* ashamed of me?" she echoed, and wheeled on me, to stand looking at me in a dreadful way.

"Yes," I said, "I *was,*" and I said it hard.

She drew a deep breath, and was about to start in when I decided I would go. I only heard her say, "You come from the backwoods of Pennsylvania, and so you cannot understand the—*the infamy of your statement,* but in New York *I*—my *family*—"

And into this I broke in with something that was horrible to say, I know it, but it was a satisfaction. I said, "Good night old mud-hen," and then shut the door. But before I had my own opened, she had jerked through hers, to stand in the corridor and wave her brush at me, "Never," she called loudly, "*Never call me 'Mud-hen' again!*"

"I will if I want to," I said. "You may count in New York, but I come from Pennsylvania." And then I went in my room and felt ashamed.

For two days after that Leslie cut me out of her talking list, too, and the only words I had from her were icicle-hung requests to pass things. On the third, I went into the practice room that was farthest down the hall—my afternoon hours followed hers that day—and I found her with her head in her arms, crying.

I felt very sorry for her, and I put my hand on her shoulder, and I said, "Leslie," quite softly, and she turned away from me for a moment, and then turned to me and clung to my arm. I patted her and smoothed her hair, and I think I made her feel a little better.

Anyway, she stopped crying, and wiped her eyes, and asked me to go to Doney's with her for tea. But I said I wouldn't do that.

"Why not?" she asked in her old, cool, lofty manner and she raised her brows in a way that confessed she was surprised over my daring to refuse her invitation.

"Because," I answered, "you took Viola, and now you're mad at her, and you're telling every one how *often* you took her out, and how *much* you did for her."

She grew red. I think she didn't like it, but I had to say it.

"I'll take a walk," I said. She didn't answer that, but, head high, collected her music and flounced off. After I had practised about an hour I heard a noise at the doorway, and I looked up to see Leslie standing in it.

"You were quite right," she stated, in the stiffest voice I had ever heard, and she looked right over my head. "I know it. I will be glad to walk with you if you like—"

"All right," I answered, after a look at the little wrist watch father had given to me, before I left, "I'll be ready in fifteen minutes; fourteen and a half more here, and a half to get into my things—"

And I think that day started our real friendship.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PLANS FOR A PARTY

BY Christmas time I was so well acquainted with both Leslie and Viola, that when, a week before Christmas, Viola called me in her room and told me what she was writing, I told her that I thought she was foolish.

"Why?" she asked, as she looked at the envelope that was addressed to her father.

"Doesn't he send you all the money he can?" I questioned in turn.

"Probably," (she jabbed holes in the blotter with her pen) "but I need more. You see early in the game—when *Miss* Parrish *deigned* to notice me, I borrowed money of her, she was always pressing it upon me—one of her *sweet* ways of impressing people with her *wealth importance*—" (I didn't say anything, but I thought Viola was mean) "and I need to repay that, and then—my clothes are in *rags,*" (which was nonsense, for they weren't) "and I always do ask father for extra money at Christmas time," she continued, "because he softens then—or is in so deep that he thinks a little more won't matter—

anyway, since I always do ask him, there's no reason for you to be so shocked—"

"He's your father," I stated, "but I'll tell *you,* I'd hate to send *my* father a letter like that to get around Christmas time!"

Viola shrugged her shoulders. Then she grew haughty. "As you say," she said, "he *is* my father, and it is *my* affair—"

"You asked me about it," I put in sharply, "I was going by, and you called me in and said you were writing your father for money, and asked me what I thought would come of it—"

"I meant how *much* would come of it."

"Oh."

"He's quite used to it, Jane," she went on, and almost apologetically, "Mother has to ask him for extra money *all the time.* . . . We simply *struggle,* and *pinch* at every point, but even then we can't put up half the appearance that we should, and we never have what *every one* around us has—and takes for granted. Did you hear Miss Meek say 'I'll wager it's jolly slummish around the jail!' yesterday when I was describing our breakfast room? *Horrid old thing!*"

I didn't say so, but Viola had made Miss Meek hazard this opinion about Ossining because she, Viola, had put on so many unnecessary and silly airs about her home. Miss Meek added, after her first remark, that of course she knew nothing

whatsoever about it, since she never had visited such low places. The moment that followed had been strained—and funny!

"It does seem," Viola went on, after she had wiped her pen on her stocking, and then said something vigorous because she had forgotten that she wore a brown pair, "it does *seem* as if Father might *try* to do better. It makes it very hard for a girl of my type. . . . It doesn't agree with me to accommodate to poverty, or to pinch and scrape as I have to *all the time!*"

That was nonsense, but I didn't say so, because with Leslie and Viola my opinion about money and things didn't count.

So I only stood there a minute, feeling a little sorry for Viola and very sorry for her father, and wondering why people felt so about that which Viola called "Appearance," and then I decided I'd go to my room and finish a letter I'd started to Mother, who would, Miss Sheila had stated, write me herself, very soon.

"Where are you going?" asked Viola after I had said I must hurry on.

"My room," I answered, as I turned the door knob.

"How'd your lesson go?"

"Pretty well."

"If *Miss* Parrish doesn't join you, I will later."

"All right," I responded, "but I won't have a fire—"

"I should think you'd *die* without one," said Viola, pityingly.

"I get along all right," I answered, shortly, because it seemed to me that Viola had better get along without a fire herself—a scuttle of coal cost about thirty cents, and the kindling that started it, ten—instead of shivering for me, *while* she badgered her father for money that she confessed wouldn't be easy for him to spare.

"Don't be angry," she called after me.

"I'm not angry," I replied.

"Well, you acted it. . . . Funny holiday, isn't it? Just sitting in our rooms. No parties or anything—"

"We could have one if you and Leslie wouldn't hitch at it, and spoil everything," I responded. "We could get a nice one up—"

"Well, I'm willing to fly the white flag that evening," she stated with an indifference I felt that she put on.

But that made the party possible, for I saw how it might be managed and I hurried right on to Leslie's room to find her lying down on her bed and staring up at a sky blue ceiling that had gilt stars painted on it.

"Look here," I said, as I shut the door after myself, "I think we ought to have a party, a

Christmas party, but we can't unless you and Viola stop scrapping for the evening. She said she would; will you?"

Leslie sat up and drew her padded silk dressing gown around her, and then answered. "I am sure," she said, "that I would act as I *always* do. One's personal feelings dare not be aired; I *assure* you I *invariably* exercise restraint—"

"All right," I answered and then I sat down on the edge of her bed, and we planned it.

"Mr. Wake and Sam will come," I said, after we had decided to buy those cracker things that pop and have paper caps in them, and Leslie had said she would donate some pastries and some French chocolates.

"Mr. Wake would be fearfully bored," she objected.

"I don't believe it," I disagreed.

"But with Miss Meek and Miss Bannister and Mr. Hemmingway? For of course if we have it here we'll have to ask the old things!"

"Probably it'll be the first party they've been to in years," I stated, and I saw that Leslie felt a little mean.

"Well, I'd tell him that the whole institution will be on board," she advised, and I said I would.

"Beata would serve," said Leslie, who seemed to have a lot of head about planning the refreshments and how they should be brought on.

"And she'd like it," I commented, "probably it'll help her out."

"What's the matter with her, any way?" Leslie asked, and I'd told Leslie about forty times, but I told her once again.

"How much does she need?" she asked, as she lay back and again looked up at the ceiling.

"I think about seventy-five dollars," I answered. Leslie laughed in a queer, unhappy way.

"Fancy it's being as simple as that!" she murmured in an undertone.

"Not particularly simple, if she can't get it," I disagreed. "And poor Beata doesn't believe she'll ever be able to save it, and she loved him so. His name is Pietro La Nasa, and he *is* good looking. . . . I've seen him standing in the court—he knows Gino, who owns the brass shop down there—and he looks up so *longingly*—and you know how much Beata cries—"

"Yes, I know—"

Suddenly Leslie turned and clasped my hand between both of hers. "Look here, Jane," she said, and with the prettiest look I had ever seen on her pretty face, "we'll try to make this a real party. . . . My father sent me a little extra money—I had a dividend from something or other that has done well—and I'd *love* to spend it this way. . . . As you say, the crowd here probably haven't had a good time for years—"

"And may not again for years—if ever—" I put in. Leslie nodded.

"We'll *do* it," she said, with lots of energy in her voice. "And you can ask Viola to help with the decorating and so on. . . . Understand, *I want nothing to do with her after it is over.* . . . I shall never forget the things she said to me about my Grandfather who had a *little* interest in a factory where they put up chow chow (he made his *fortune in railroads*) and about my having an inflated idea of my own importance. I have *not,* but I assure you, Jane, the Harris-Clarkes are *nobodies—*"

Well, I'd heard that all about a thousand times before, and I had got so that I was honestly bored —and for the first time in my life—whenever Viola started on the Parrishes, or Leslie about the Harris-Clarkes.

"I can't give any presents," I broke in.

"I'll loan you any amount, dear," said Leslie, quickly.

"No, you won't!" I answered. "I won't give presents because I *shouldn't,* but we can have an awfully good time, presents or not!"

"And will!" she promised, quickly, and then she crawled out and put a kettle of water over her spirit lamp and began to make tea, and I had three cups and four crackers and two slices of nut cake and some kisses. Then, feeling a little

refreshed, I went back to my own room, on the way stopping at Viola's. "It's all right," I said, from the doorway, "she'll pretend, if you will—"

"I'm honestly *glad,*" said Viola.

Before I started on, I saw her lick the flap of the envelope that was to take her complaining letter across the sea to her father—I had a queer, sad feeling as she did it, and then I said a short "By," and went on to my own room.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CUPID AND A LADY SANTA CLAUS

TWO days later at about five in the afternoon, Leslie looked around the living room which was growing dark, as she said, "I think we've done wonderfully!"

Viola was tying some red tissue paper around the funny little tree that Leslie, with great effort, had got from a florist, and after she stood erect and stretched, she responded to Leslie with a murmured, "Simply *sweet!*"

"Don't *you* think so, Jane?" asked Leslie coolly. She had ignored Viola all that afternoon by addressing me, and after she did this pointedly, Viola always huffed up, and appealed to me, too. It made me feel as if I were interpreter in the tower of Babel, and it left me far from comfortable! And it was all *so* silly!

"I certainly do," I answered as I looked around, and it was fine!

Mr. Wake, who had accepted our invitation with great pleasure, had sent in flowers and big branches of foliage from his place, and these were in vases, and massed in corners; and Sam, who had just left, had helped us make twisted red streamers that he had wound around the funny

chandelier, and we had put red paper around all the lumpy vases that Miss Julianna seemed to like so much; and the bare little tree was on the center table, with a ring of candles, set up in their own grease around it. It doesn't sound especially pretty, but it was, as well as very cheering.

Over the back of a chair hung a long red gown that Leslie was going to wear as she gave out a few little presents. Her giving them was entirely correct, because the Italian Santa Claus is a lady called "Befana," and the only way we changed things was by having the Befana come on Christmas Eve instead of on Epiphany.

On the mantel were some pink tarletan stockings filled with candy—there was no fastening them up, the mantel was made of marble—and Leslie had got a little piece of mistletoe which Sam had hung in the doorway.

"Really, it has the feeling of Christmas," said Leslie, as she picked up the gown, which I had made on her with safety pins.

"*Hasn't* it?" murmured Viola, who, in spite of saying the most bitter things, did want to make up.

"When it's lit by candles it will be pretty," I prophesied, and it was. Then we picked up the hammers and the nails that always lie around on the edges of things after you've put up Christmas decorations, and went to dress, closing the door very carefully after us, and locking it.

Beata, who was tremendously interested in the new version of their Befana, and who had asked a great deal—through Miss Julianna—about the person she called "Meester Sant' Claus," smiled at us as we passed the kitchen, and I saw that she hadn't cried that day, and that she wore her best dress, and a shabby, yet gay artificial flower in one side of her dark hair.

"Sant' Claus come?" she managed, while we were yet within hearing; Leslie called "Not yet—" and then we went on, and parted.

In my room, before I lit the light, I will confess that I had a little moment of sadness, during which home seemed far away and I wished I had as much money to spend as Leslie had. . . . I had wanted to give Miss Meek and Miss Bannister and Mr. Hemmingway very nice presents, because they needed them, but of course I couldn't give them much. I had found for Miss Bannister a leather picture frame in a shop that was opposite the Pitti Palace—she had said she meant to get a frame for a picture she had of her old home, but that she always forgot it while out, (she is really very poor) and I had got for Miss Meek, who is very gay, a gray comb that had brilliants in it—it was only fifty cents; I got it in a stall outside of a church called Santa Croce—and I had got Mr. Hemmingway a book from a little shop back of the Duomo that had "My memories" written on it in

gilt—I mean on the book, not the Duomo, of course—for I thought he would enjoy writing down some of the happenings that occurred at the times he never could remember.

Then I had two lovely colored linen handkerchiefs which had been given me before I sailed, and fortunately, I had only carried them and never put them into active use, and I did these up for Beata and Miss Julianna.

I didn't give anything to the others, and I wished I could. I had that feeling that leads even restrained people to rush out on Christmas Eve and buy a great deal that they can't afford, but after I reasoned it through I knew that I shouldn't, because I wanted to pay back Miss Sheila—I had decided that I preferred to do this—and I wanted to return what I could, as soon as I could, to my own family, who had sacrificed a great deal for me. Then my allowance wasn't large—Leslie told me she considered it about adequate for a week's allowance of French pastries and digestion tablets—and so I wrote the rest of my friends notes. I used my best stationery that hasn't any blue lines on it, but instead a silver "J" in the corner, and after I had written:

"Dear Mr. Wake:

"I do hope that you will be very happy this Christmas and always! "Your friend,

"Jane Jones."

I snipped a paragraph from Miss Sheila's last letter, for he seemed to like hearing about her, and talking of her, and the paragraph was about him.

"I am sure," she had written, "that the Mr. Wake of whom you write so often, must be a real addition to your Florentine life. I did, very much, like his story of the wedding of Lorenzo, The Magnificent."

(He was one of the Medici)

"I saw it, dear, as you said he made you see it. . . . And wouldn't Florence be a nice city to be married in? I think if I had all my life to do over, I would go to a Padre in Florence, with some unlucky man, and pay a lot of scheming little wretches to throw roses before me as I left the church. . . . You see what a romantic mood has attacked your old friend? I think I *must* need a tonic! Please write me the titles of your Mr. Wake's books; I am ashamed to say that I haven't read them, but I want to, and I shall—"

It did please him, I saw him read it three times that very evening; twice while Mr. Hemmingway was trying to remember the first time that he had ever seen a plum pudding brought in, on the center of a blazing platter; and the third time, while Viola was describing the last Christmas and dragging in through it a long description of a lodge in the Adirondacks.

But to get on, or rather go back and start where

I should, Miss Julianna had a very fine dinner because of our party, and she sat down with us, which wasn't always her custom—she often helped in the kitchen—and Mr. Hemmingway had raked up some greenish black dress clothes from somewhere, and Miss Bannister had her hair on as nearly straight as I had ever seen it, and Miss Meek wore a purple velvet dress with green buttons and a piece of old lace on it, which I had never before seen, but which she had spoken of in a way that made me know that she thought it very fine.

Of course Leslie was beautiful—she had on a new dress made of several shades of light blue chiffon, and this fluttered and changed as she walked—and there was a silver ribbon girdle on it, and silver ribbons knotted here and there over the shining white satin lining, and she wore silver slippers, and blue stockings with silver lace inserts, and she had a silver bandeau on her hair. I told her she was lovely.

Viola had pulled out all her extra eyebrows and looked sort of skinned, but she felt fixed up, so it was all right. She wore a red velvet dress that was pretty too. I wore a brown silk dress that had plaid trimming, and it put me in Miss Meek's class, but I didn't mind.

After we sat down, and made conversation in that stiff way that people do when they are all wearing their best clothes and aren't quite used

to them, Mr. Hemmingway stood up and picked up the smaller wine glass that stood by his plate—we had two sorts of wine—and he looked at me, bowed, and said, "To the United States and her lovely daughters—"

I thought it was *very* kind.

Then Miss Bannister blinked, and nodded, and squeaked out, "To the people we love who aren't here—"

And I wasn't a bit ashamed of the fact that my eyes filled with tears and that I had to blink and swallow like the dickens, because every one else was doing the same thing.

After we drank that Mr. Hemmingway said, "It was, if I recall correctly, the Christmas of '76 that I first met the customs of Italy at Christmas and Epiphany; I can, I *think,* without undue assumption of certainty state *flatly* that it *was* in '76, and I assert this, because in the fall of '76 I was experiencing my first attack of *bronchitis;* and I recall this, because the June of that same year, '76, as I have heretofore mentioned, I had taken a trip up the Severn—or was that, now that I probe, '74? *Let me see, let me see—*"

And then Miss Meek boomed out her "Ho hum!" and every one felt more natural and lots better. After that the stiffness slid away—all in a second—and Miss Meek tossed her head and told about the fine Christmases she had seen, and

Miss Bannister told of how the children in the village where she had lived sung carols, and Mr. Hemmingway searched after dates that wouldn't come to him; and Viola and Leslie listened with more kindness than usual.

After we had had the lumpy, heavy sort of pudding that people always serve around Christmas, we sat back and talked some more while we waited for Mr. Wake and Sam to come. And at last the bell in the hall swung to and fro, and then there *was* excitement. Beata, who courtesied very low, let them in, and they called out their greetings and wishes to every one, even before I had presented them.

Mr. Wake had a big bag under his arm that was pleasantly lumpy, and he said that Santa Claus had dropped it on the hillside near Fiesole and told him to deliver it. Then we all stood up, and after Leslie had lit the many candles in the drawing room, she rung a bell, and we filed in.

She summoned Mr. Wake first, and I was glad she did, because going up to the table where she stood might have been hard for some of the others. And after Mr. Wake took his present, he gave a little boarding school bow—that dip at the knees that makes girls shorter than they are for the second in which they do it—and every one followed his lead. We did have the best time! But, and I suppose it sounds strange, it got in your

throat and made it feel cramped. I can't explain why, but when Miss Bannister and Miss Meek couldn't, at first, open their packages because their hands shook so, it did make you feel *queer.*

Miss Bannister didn't say anything—she only looked at her presents while her lips moved—but Miss Meek kept up an incessant string of, "Oh, I say!" or "How *too* ripping, don't you know!" in a voice that was not entirely steady. And both of them had very bright, little, round spots of color on their usually faded cheeks, and their eyes were very, very bright.

Mr. Hemmingway was so absorbed in a Dunhill pipe that Mr. Wake insisted Santa had sent, that he didn't mention a date for fully a half hour. He only looked at that pipe, and murmured, "My, *my!* Never did think I'd *own* one. My, my, *my!*"

And there were papers and cords all over the floor, and it looked and felt *quite* Christmasy.

It was after Mr. Hemmingway got his pipe that I went over to stand by Sam at a window; he had been watching me a little, and I thought perhaps he was lonely for home, or something, because he looked that way.

"I think it's a fine party," I said, "Don't you?"

"Best ever," he answered. Then he coughed, and fumbled around in his pocket, and slipped a small box in my hand. "I'd like to say something darned nice," he murmured, "but all my parlor

conversation seems to have gone on a vacation—"

"Is it for *me?*" I asked. I was *surprised,* for I thought that the violets he had given me only a little time before, were enough!

"Who the dickens *would* I give it to?" he answered, in a half irritated way. "Think I want to give anything to the other two? I don't! When I come to think of it, I never did want to buy any truck for *any* other girl before—"

I enjoyed that; every woman does enjoy that sort of thing. And when I opened the box I almost went over backward; it held the most beautiful bead bag I'd ever seen; it was really *prettier than any of Leslie's!* It had a brown and gold background, and soft pink roses on it, and it swung from a gold cord, and had sliding gold rings on that. I knew he shouldn't have done it for, even to my simple soul, it spelled a lot of money.

I couldn't say much, but I did say, "You shouldn't have given it to me, Sam—"

"Don't you like it, dear?" he asked. I didn't mind that "Dear" at all. In fact I liked it. I had come to think of Sam as the best friend I'd ever had.

"I *love* it," I answered, "but it must have cost a *great deal*—"

He laughed down at me. "Look here, young woman," he said, in his drawling slow way, "Some day I'm going to *ask* you to take over the man-

agement of my finances, but until I do, I want the privilege of buying you a little thing like that once and again—"

What he said about finances worried me terribly, because I can't add at all, and my cash account gives me real pain, and I have almost nothing to account for or to enter. But even at that, each month there is too much or too little, which makes me have to add a cream puff, or take one out.

"Sam," I said, "I'd do *anything* for you, because I like you *so* much, but I can't add. Why don't you get Mr. Wake to help you? He's there anyway, you see, and in a year I'll be over in America—"

He slipped his arm through mine, and squeezed it against his side.

"Mr. Wake is right about you," he said, as he smiled down at me, in a sort of a funny way.

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, he thinks you a dear little girl. . . . And you are—just that."

"Don't you like it?" I questioned, because it didn't seem exactly as if he did.

"Yes—surely—but, I don't want you to get over liking me when you grow up."

"Why, Sam, I *couldn't!*" I protested, and then I slipped my hand in his, "Don't you *know* how much I like you?" I ended very earnestly because

I *did* want him to understand, and I believe he did, although Leslie called my name before he answered and I had to go up to get my presents.

And after I did, I was absolutely unable to say anything, for every one had been so *kind* to me! Miss Bannister had given me one of the pictures of her old home that she loved so much, and Miss Meek, a collar that her own mother had embroidered, and Mr. Hemmingway, a pen holder that he had gotten in Brazil either in '64 or '65—he *couldn't* remember which, although he tried very hard to fasten the exact date in various ways—and Viola gave me a beautiful blue bottle with scent in it, and Leslie gave me a blouse that I had seen in a shop on the Lungarno and admired—it was tan pongee with heavy coral stitching, and about the color of my hair—the tan, I mean, not the coral—and Miss Julianna had given me a tomato can, that she had painted, with a flower in it, and I liked it *very* much; and Beata, a handkerchief that she had made herself. Mr. Wake gave me a scarab ring, that swung around in its setting, and had the name of the Princess who had first worn it in hieroglyphs on the back, and when I went to thank him, he slipped it on my finger, and made a wish. Then he said to Sam, who had come over to stand with us, "Want to have a shot, old boy? You can twist it, and perhaps the gods will listen—"

So Sam did, and he said it was a *fine* wish! Then Beata brought in the refreshments, which were pastries, wine, ices and candies and little nut-filled cakes, (Leslie lost a filling while eating one) and we pulled crackers and put on the caps and things that came out of them, and read the mottoes and Mr. Hemmingway got so gay that he kissed Miss Meek who had wandered over under the mistletoe. And it all made a great deal of excitement and fun.

And after that—just when every one was beginning to have a cold feeling around the edges, from thinking that it was all almost over—the very nicest thing happened. Leslie, who had taken off her long Befana gown, and again looked like a corn flower with silver frost on it, called out, "One more gift; Befana has brought it to Beata, but she was only the messenger of Cupid!"

And then she handed Beata an envelope in which was all the money that Beata needed for her dowry!

I never shall forget that moment, and the way Beata looked when she understood what her gift was. She covered her face with her arm and sobbed deeply and so hard that it shook her; and Leslie, whose eyes had grown wet, called Pietro —whom she had got Miss Julianna to ask in for that hour—and he came from the hall, and Beata explained, and Pietro kissed her hands, and then

Leslie's, and then raised both of his hands high and his face to the ceiling, and *exploded!*

I never heard anything like it, and of course no one except Mr. Wake, who speaks and understands Italian very well, could understand, but he did, and he said that Pietro was thanking God for rich Americans, and for the fact that the hope of his life had come true.

It made every one feel shaky and upset to look on at Beata and Pietro. Even Miss Meek had to cough and say, "Oh, my eye! How jolly!" It was very damp and very sweet, and it was a positive relief to be diverted by Mr. Hemmingway, who broke the strain by saying: "How well I recall my first experience with the Latin emotion. It was, if I recall correctly, in the spring of '60, and I attest this because of my youth, and the fact that in '59 I had my first pearl gray trousers. Those are fastened in my memory by a tailor who, if I recall, had his place of business in Ludgate Circus, and I remember him keenly, because—"

And on and on in his characteristic way.

Not long after that Sam and Mr. Wake left, and Miss Bannister and Miss Meek and Mr. Hemmingway gathered up their things and the cords and papers that had wrapped them, and I saw Mr. Hemmingway enter something about the evening in the book I gave him, which pleased me, and we all went to bed.

Mr. Hemmingway got so gay that he kissed
Miss Meek.

I lay awake quite awhile in the dark, the way you do after you've been to a party and had a good time, and I think it was fully an hour before I slept. Then, after what seemed ten minutes, I woke to see Leslie standing by my bed, and to feel her hand on my shoulder, shaking me.

"Heavens, you sleep soundly," she complained. "I have a toothache, and *I can't stand pain.* We'll have to find some dentist who is in his office, and I want you to go with me and stay right by me and say 'Molto sensitivo' every time I kick you. Oh, *do* hurry! And *don't* forget to tell him that it's sensitive."

She clamped her hands against her jaw, as she finished speaking, and I sat up to lean over the edge of my bed and fumble for my slippers.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE EFFECT OF A SECRET

IT was hard to get down to real work after Christmas, for there was a spirit of gaiety in the air that was too strong to be ignored. In the streets was always the shrill noise that came from little tin horns; children were always playing on the pavements with their new toys, and you could hardly go a block without seeing a crowd around a vender of something or other that was built to please small people. . . . Monkeys that climb up frail, yellow sticks will always make me think of Florence in holiday dress—I know it! And through them I'll see again the thick, taupe fogs that spread over the city so much of the time, to muffle its bells, leave slime upon its pavements and a dull creeping cold in all the shadows.

Or, I'll see Florence at night and Harlequins and Juliets and Romeos, or wide sombreroed Spaniards walking beside Egyptian Princesses, or some girl in the costume of Normandy with a sweetheart in clanking armor; for in Florence there are many masked balls after Christmas, and at night one may see the people who go to these strolling along

in the best of good humors, and daring all sorts of things because of the protection given them by their disguise.

Paper rose leaves were tossed in the air, every pretty girl was spoken to, and there was lots of laughter, and the nicest sort of fun. . . . I, myself, felt that grim Florence must be pleased, for the city of Florence is built to back brilliant costumes, and not the tweeds and serges that she sees most. I wondered, as I looked one night when I was out with Mr. Wake and Sam, whether ghosts in satins and brocades, the ghosts of brides who had ridden all over Florence on snow white chargers before their weddings, whether these ghosts weren't, perhaps, mingling in the throng. . . . Mr. Wake thought they were, and after I spoke of my feelings, he pointed out to me, a ghost named Vanna Tornabuoni, who, because she had been wicked, saw in her mirror instead of her fair face that of the horned devil! And she therefore went to confession immediately—in Santa Maria Novella, if I'm not mistaken—and began a new and a better life.

And all this was pleasing and most fascinating, but as I said, it made work difficult even for me, and for Viola—who swayed with any wind—work stopped. Even Signor Paggi's most bitter scorn didn't do anything but make her weep.

"I'm sick of it anyway," she confided to me

just before New Year's day. "I wish now I'd listened to Father and never come—"

"Didn't he want you to?" I asked.

"No—the old objection, money. But I was wild over being with Leslie then, and I persuaded him. Now—" (She drew rings on her blotters; I had dropped into her room to find her writing) "now, I wish I had listened to him."

I didn't say anything; there wasn't very much to say.

"About to-morrow," she went on—I had come in to tell her that Mr. Wake asked us to go with him to a monastery called Certosa, on the following afternoon— "about to-morrow, I don't know. But I don't *believe* I'll go this time. I saw a frock and a blouse in a shop on the Lungarno, and I thought that, if I could make the woman listen to reason, I'd take them both. She is asking about forty dollars in our money for the frock, but I think she'll come down. I'm positively in *rags*, and I planned to go out about the time Mr. Wake wants us to start. I'm awfully keen to get that frock—"

(She never did—something kept her from even wanting it—but of that, later)

"Can't you shop in the morning?" I asked.

"Hate to get up—" (She drew a larger ring) "Truly sorry; I'd really like to but I'm obsessed

by that blouse and frock. . . . The frock's blue, with silver and lavender embroidered, Japanese-looking motifs. . . . Simply heavenly. . . *French* in every line! . . . It's honestly worth far *more* than she asks, but I expect to get her down a few pegs. . . ."

"Sorry," I said, and then I went on to Leslie's room to ask her. I found her wearing her chin strap and polishing her nails. "Hello," she said without changing her expression. (I knew then that she had on a grease cream that is put on to remove wrinkles. Leslie hasn't any, but she says a great aunt whom she looks a lot like has *dozens,* and so she means to stall them before they even think of coming!) "What do you want?"

"Here," I said, and held out Mr. Wake's letter, which Leslie took, held up to the light and looked through, and after murmuring, "Hand made"—read.

"Can't," she stated, "I suppose you'll think I'm crazy, but I asked Miss Meek and Miss Bannister to go out to tea with me to-morrow afternoon."

"I think it's fine of you," I disagreed.

"Not at *all,*" she answered sharply. (She hated being thought sentimental, and any mention of the kind things that she was coming to do, more and more regularly, really embarrassed her)

"Nothing 'fine' about it at all! Only Miss Meek had never been to Doney's and I thought she'd like it."

"She will," I said, and then I told her I was sorry she couldn't go, and went back to my own room, and sewed clean collars and cuffs in my serge dress, and looked over some music which Signor Paggi wanted me to read away from the piano and try to see and *feel* in my mind. Then I went to my window and opened it, to hang out and peer down in the court. . . . It looked cold, and almost dreary, and I was glad to think that spring would be along soon, and I hoped that it would be nice, but I never dreamed, as I stood there, how nice it was to be, nor how many changes and happy readjustments it was to back.

Gino came out, as I was looking down, but he didn't whistle or sing—I think that Italian whistling and singing is cranked by the bright sun—and then he went in again. A cat pounced on a dried leaf that fluttered across one of the brown paths. . . . A brilliant parrot that hung in his cage outside of a window down the block a little way, sung out shrilly, and I noticed a dark-skinned woman across the way hanging clothes out on a line that was strung from her shutter to a neighbor's. . . . It was when I was seeing all these things that Beata tapped, and came in bearing my second let-

ter from home—oh, it was so good to get them!—and one from Miss Sheila.

I read them both through several times, and then I slipped Mother's letter in the pocket of the dress I wore, and Miss Sheila's letter into the pocket of my suit coat, for in Miss Sheila's letter was news that I felt sure Mr. Wake would enjoy, and I meant to read it aloud to him on the following day.

Certosa is a large and beautiful place that tops a hill, about three miles outside of Florence, and I enjoyed going there, although it made me feel sad. I suppose my feeling was silly, but the order is an ancient one; they take in no new members, and all that are left to rattle around in the very big place are a half dozen tottering old men, whose hands shake as they unlock the heavy doors for you, and whose breath grows short as they travel the long stairs that take one up to the Capella Prima, which means the main chapel.

I noticed that the white-bearded, white-haired and white-robed monk who took us around talked almost incessantly, and Sam told me why.

"Quiet almost all the time," he said, "from some vow or other, and I guess the poor old chaps feel like letting out when they can."

I said I thought it was too bad, and that it was pleasanter to think of men getting old with their families around them, and Sam thought so too.

We were out in the Cloister of Certosa. Cloisters are open squares that are surrounded by the buildings to which they belong, and they are in all the churches and monasteries and are always most lovely. After the sifted, gray light of a church, the sunlight and the beautiful green growing things that fill these spaces are almost too lovely. And usually a white or brown garbed monk—sometimes wearing no more than sandals, on his feet—stands in some archway or wanders back and forth in a loggia and this adds to the picture.

The cloister we looked on was centered by a well with a wrought iron top that has been copied a great deal, and after Sam had spoken of it, he—as he whittled at a stick—asked me whether I intended to marry. I said I hoped so, but that with women a lot depended upon whether any man asked them. That made him laugh, and he put his hand over mine.

"Some one's bound to ask you," he said, as he curled up my fingers in my palm and then undid them again, to do it all over—sometimes Sam is *very* restless—"but, Jane, do tell me any old thing won't do!"

"Oh, I'd have to *like* him," I said, for although I knew little about love, I felt *certain* of that. Then Mr. Wake appeared, and he frowned on us terribly. "Look here, children," he said, "you

know you mustn't hold hands in a cloister—" (I laughed, but I got pink, for honestly, I hadn't realized I was doing that. It only seemed natural and nice, and not anything about it made me conscious until that moment!) "You know," Mr. Wake went on, "one of these old boys will see you, and wonder how the thing is done, and pop! some nice evening he'll crawl over the wall, and hike down to Florence, and try to find a sweetheart. Then some jealous brother will see him come in late, and report, and there'll be no end of a row. You want to *think of these things!*"

I tried to free my hand, but Sam held it too tightly, because, I think, he saw it teased me.

"Fra Lippo Lippi did that," said Mr. Wake. "He used to skip over the wall almost every evening after dark. Then he'd come in late, and tiptoe through the corridors, carrying his shoes in his hands. Mr. Browning made a good story about it. Tell you, when you get down to it, there is *nothing* new under the sun! . . . Jane, am I going to have to speak *sharply* to you, about your conduct?" (He pretended I was holding Sam's long hand)

"You'd better be nice to me," I said, and I was really almost peevish, "because I've always *tried* to be nice to you, and I have a letter from my Miss Sheila, that's awfully nice—"

"It's a *shame,*" said Sam quickly—and I think

he was sorry he had teased me; he is almost always very gentle with me—and he patted my hand, and returned it to my lap with a great deal of funny ceremony. Then I ordered him off, and he wandered across the cloister and stood there smoking and watching us. And *then* I read Mr. Wake the nice news.

"Well, what, dear child?" he asked, as I got out the letter.

"You *wait,*" I said.

"I am—small person—quite a letter, isn't it?"

"Yes—the news is on the last page, I believe," I answered. "She writes from front to back, and then down across the middle one. . . . Here 'tis. 'I have a secret to tell you,' I read, 'and one that you must keep—' "

"Ah, Eve!" broke in Mr. Wake, as he smiled down at me until all the little wrinkles stood out around his eyes.

"Well, you're *different,*" I said. He swelled. "*Adam!*" I said, and he told me I was a saucy minx, to go on, and I did.

" 'This spring,' Miss Sheila wrote, 'will see me in Florence, but I don't want Leslie to know I shall appear, for if she does I am sure she'll want to go back with me. I think this winter is doing her good, and I want her to stick the entire time through.' "

"Nice?" I said, as I folded up the letter which

made crinkly, crackly noises as it went into the envelope, because it was written on such heavy paper. I had supposed Mr. Wake would think it *very* nice, and therefore I was surprised to look at him, and see him moisten his lips, and then hear him say, "I don't know—"

"But, Mr. *Wake!*" I said—I was a good deal disappointed—"I thought you would *like* meeting her—"

(He turned, walked away a few steps and then came back)

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Wake, "that I am too old to meet a Fairy Godmother. No doubt—" (he was trying to play, but his tone was a little stiff) "she'd suggest picnicking in the moonlight —isn't that the hour when Fairy Rings are most popular?—and that might make my shoulders stiff. Then—seriously, dear child—I am no good as a cavalier; I falter. Children and old ladies are the age for me now, and soon it will be middle-aged women, whom I shall think of as children. So I am afraid I'd best refuse your alluring offer."

"Well," I said, and my voice was flat because I felt so, "you know you don't have to meet her; Florence is big—"

"And the world," he stated, "is big, but sometimes, in spite of the bigness, one can't get away from—things—"

Well, I *didn't* understand him. All that winter he had asked me about Miss Sheila, until whenever I saw him her name just naturally came out and sat on the tip of my tongue, waiting for the word from him that would make it jump off into space. It did seem very *queer!* I stuck the letter deep in my pocket, and tried not to feel disappointed, I knew that I shouldn't, but—I *did!* Mr. Wake had been so dear to me, and was so dear, that I wanted to make him happy, and I'd supposed I could do so by having a party and asking him to meet Miss Sheila.

"You know," he said, and I could see he was trying to get back to normal, and to make me think he felt quite as usual, "an old person like me, with a fat tummy, simply *can't* meet a fairy godmother—he wouldn't know how to act!"

"Your stomach's *much* better," I answered bluntly, "you needn't blame it on *that!* If you don't want to meet her, just *say* so, but, I'll tell you, *you'll miss it!* She's lovely, and she'd be very kind to you—she's kind to every one—"

"Is she?" he broke in, and he smiled in a strange way.

"Yes," I answered hotly, "she *is.*"

We were quiet a moment. Then Mr. Wake put his hand over mine. "Dear child," he said, "I'm *sorry* to disappoint you—"

"What about examples *now?*" asked Sam, who

came strolling up. Then he saw that there was something straining in the air, and he quickly changed the subject. "Found a bush all in bloom on the other side of the court," he said, "Come over and see it, Jane. Almost as pretty as you are, back in a second, Signor Wake—"

"Long as you like," said Mr. Wake with a wave, by which he meant we might linger.

"What is it?" asked Sam, after we had wandered into the center of the big space that was surrounded on all sides by the building. I told him, and then I said, "It surprised me; he has talked about her—so much that at first I thought he must have known her, but she wrote she'd never known any one named Wake, and now—he doesn't *want* to know her—"

"Match-maker?" asked Sam.

"No," I answered, and a little sharply, because I was still disappointed, "but I thought he'd *like* it. And they are both so nice, and Miss Sheila *is* lonely—you can see it sometimes, although perhaps she doesn't know it—and I *did* think that if they liked each other it *would* be nice—"

"I'll tell you what," said Sam, "I'll let you make a match for me. I'll pick out the girl, and you'll tell me how to get her—"

"All right," I promised, and I felt more dismal than ever. I don't know why, but I did.

"That please you?" he asked.

"Not entirely," I answered with candor, "I think you'll *ruin* your career if you marry too early!"

"It doesn't look as if I would," he stated, and he sighed. And I felt worse than ever.

"That'll be the end of our friendship—" I prophesied, and I felt sad, and my voice sounded it.

"Sometimes it is," Sam answered, and then he laughed. I didn't see how he could. It was a pleasant day, and the court was full of sunshine, and the grass and even some of the rose bushes were green—but everything looked bleak to me—I felt *alone,* and *blue.*

"Anything wrong?" asked Sam, after we had strolled around a little while, and looked at the well, and stolen some sprigs of herb from a little plot that had a few early vegetables in it.

"There seems to be," I answered.

"Why, Jane! . . . How can there be under the warmth of an Italian sun, and in this lovely place, and with a—a troubadour who—who adores you?" then he stopped, and I felt much better. I don't remember when I have felt so *much* better.

"I'm all right now," I said, and I smiled up at him, and then because he looked a little different from usual, I thought we'd better go back to Mr. Wake. I said so.

"Love him as much as I do," said Sam, "the

dickens with him! Look here, dear, if there is any—any satisfaction in my liking you, you can collect it any time, and what's more—the darned stuff's rolling up a whacking big interest."

I liked that; I said so. Then I said that we *must* go back to Mr. Wake, and I turned to go across the court, and Sam followed, saying he'd like to shake me.

Going down to the car we drank the wine that the friars make and sell in tiny little bottles. And Sam and I got silly and had lots of fun, but Mr. Wake was unusually quiet. I think, perhaps, we had tired him.

It was late when I reached home, for we had stopped to hear the last of a concert that was being given in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, and that led to a little table with three chairs around it, and some chocolate, and cakes.

Then Mr. Wake left us at the Piazza del Duomo, where he took the tram to Fiesole, and Sam walked up to the Piazza Indipendenza with me; we didn't hurry—he told me about his new orders, and I told him how well the twins were doing—and it seemed to take quite a little time. And it was all of seven when we stood outside the pension door, on the third floor, and shook hands.

"You'll be late for dinner," said Sam.

"It doesn't matter," I answered.

"I *hope* it won't be cold," he said.

"I don't care," I responded. Then he said he was sorry, again, and he hoped it wouldn't be cold, again, and I told him it didn't matter, again, and then we reached the point we'd both been waiting for, which was, his saying, "Well, when can I see you again?"

And after I told him—I said, "day after tomorrow," because I didn't think it was nice to *rush* things—I went in. I expected to hear Mr. Hemmingway reminiscing in the dining room, but no sound came from there; the place seemed strangely and unpleasantly still. I had expected also to encounter Beata carrying in one of the later courses, but when my eyes accommodated to the dim light I saw that Beata was sitting by the table, with her head in her arms, crying.

"Beata," I broke out quickly, "not *Pietro?*" for I was afraid that something had come along to change the course of her plans, which all led up to and centered around a wedding which was to be early in February.

Beata looked up; "Signorina," she said, "la cablegram—la Signorina Harrees-Clarke—la poverina, la *poverina!*"

That was all I stopped to hear. I hurried down the corridor to Viola's room, and at that door I paused, for Leslie was sitting on the bed by Viola, holding both of her hands in hers, and saying, as she stroked them, "There, dear, *there!*"

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CHANGES

I FOUND the cablegram that had come for Viola told her that her father was dead; the father whom she had not written since her complaining, begging letter of Christmas time.

It made me feel so sorry for her that I didn't know what to do; for I knew that the sorrow would be enough for her without acute regret attached to it; and I knew that she was going to suffer from that too.

I stood in the doorway, that afternoon, for quite a few moments before I could go in, and when I did and Viola saw me, she sat up. Her cheeks were flushed and she didn't look as if she had cried.

"Do you remember that letter?" she said.

I nodded. I couldn't speak.

"What—can you remember *just* what I said in it?" she asked. I evaded as hard and convincingly as I could, but it did no good. She remembered it, only she had to talk of it, and she did it through questioning me.

"I—I told him that Leslie's clothes made me feel like a pauper—" she stated in a hard, high

voice, "that—that I'd had to struggle and pinch—I told him—"

I broke in then. And I made her lie down, and I got Leslie started at making tea, and then I helped Viola into bed, and tried to do what I could to divert her through taking off her clothes and making her comfortable and brushing her hair, and Leslie took the cue and stopped saying, "Oh, my dear, how *can* I help you?" which was not just what Viola needed then.

Every one was dreadfully upset, and worried for Viola, and Miss Meek came over with smelling salts, and Miss Bannister came tiptoeing to the door to ask what she could do, and Mr. Hemmingway, whose eyes were flooded in tears, told me of the death of his dear father—and he remembered the date—and Miss Julianna, with tears on her pretty round cheeks, came pattering in with offers of all sorts of strange things, and a little shrine, which she set up by Viola's bed.

"La Madre Santa," she said—which meant "The Sainted Mother"—and Leslie, who doesn't seem to understand the people who differ from her in their way of worship, asked Viola if it should stay.

"I can take it away, darling," she said in an undertone, "when Miss Julianna is gone."

But Viola shook her head, and I was glad, for I liked its being there. I felt a good deal of com-

fort through the picture of the pretty woman who held the little baby so tightly in her arms and smiled at any one who looked at her. We all needed comfort, and some one who could smile.

It was twelve before Viola slept, and after she did, I put out the light, and tiptoed down to Leslie's room.

I found Leslie sitting up by her table, writing, and I couldn't help seeing an envelope on it that was addressed to Ben Forbes.

She saw that I saw it, and she spoke.

"Jane," she said, "I've been a perfect fool. . . . I've always hated any one who belittled my importance or anything about me. . . . When Viola did—you know how it was—" (She drew her pretty pink, quilted dressing gown closer around her, and went on) "and I imagine the reason I haven't been wild over Aunt Sheila was because I felt she didn't *worship*. . . And you know I wanted to punish Ben Forbes—because he told me *the truth*. . . . I'm writing him—" she shoved the sheet of paper on which she had been writing toward me—"because, after he had hurt me, *with truth,* I told him that what he said made *no* difference to me, that I considered him rather uncouth, and that I had written him *only* from kindness, and the fact that I felt he was rather shut off out there in the wilds—and—lots more! Well, to get through with this, this afternoon and to-

night some things have been driven home to me by Viola's losing her own father after she had hurt him. . . . She'll have to remember now—all her life—how she had hurt him just before he died. They say"—Leslie groped for a handkerchief, and mopped her tears frankly—"they say that all sorts of accidents happen on—on r-*ranches*—"

And then she covered her face and sobbed.

I moved around the table to stand by her and put my arm around her, and then she spoke.

"Read—it," she said, with a big sob between the two words, and I did.

"DEAR BEN:" she had written.

"All my life I have been conceited; you must know it now. I do—which is a miracle—and I'm writing tonight to say that the truth you told me helped me and is helping me. I am working hard; I hope I am less a fool.

"With gratitude,

"Your old neighbor and friend,

"LESLIE PARRISH."

"Is it all right?" she asked, as I laid it down.

"Yes," I answered, "but if he likes you, and you hurt him, you ought to say you are sorry for that—"

She nodded quickly, and reached for her pen. "What would you say?" she asked, as she looked down, uncertainly, at her lovely monogramed paper.

"If I liked him, *really,*" I said, "I would write a postscript. I'd say something like, 'Dear Ben, I like you, and I didn't mean those things I said when I was cross. I will be very grateful if you will forgive me—' "

And she wrote just that.

"It doesn't sound like me," she commented in a voice that shook. "It's—it's too nice." And, again, she wiped away tears.

I leaned over, and folded the sheet, and stuck it in the envelope and sealed it, as Leslie laughed in a funny, weak way.

"Where are your stamps?" I asked. She told me, and I licked one and stuck it on. Then we kissed each other, and that was unusual. I never was so very much for kissing everybody all the time, and I think when girls do, too much, it's silly, but it was different that night. Then I went out and laid the letter on the table in the hall—we always left them there for the first person who went out to take, and then I looked in to see that Viola was still sleeping, and after that I went to bed.

That day began a new sort of life for us all. The tragedy that came to Viola was like a stone that is thrown into the center of a still pool. All sorts of widening circles grew from her trouble, and she, herself, found through it a new depth. I don't mean that everything changed in a day,

for things don't change in that manner, but all the time Viola was building up new habits in place of the old ones that were crumbling away.

I saw the roots of a fine strong habit, on the day when she got the first letter from home written after her father died.

I was with her when it came, and she looked up from the black-bordered sheet to say—vacantly, and in a level, stupid-sounding sort of tone—"He *was* poor!" I was sewing clean cuffs and collars in my serge dress and I stuck myself and made a spot of blood on one cuff. I was so sorry for her that I really shook when anything new that was hard came to her.

"Read it, Jane," she said, and she held out the letter. I did, and I couldn't imagine that any one who had ever known or really loved Viola's father had written it. It was full of complaints and self-pity, because the husband of the woman who had written it had died to leave his widow with less money than she thought she should have. I didn't know what to say. Then I suppose I did a dreadful thing, but I did it without meaning to do anything dreadful, and because I have been brought up to speak the truth.

"Maybe," I said, "he is happier dead."

The tears stood out in Viola's eyes.

"I only said that," I explained miserably, "because I thought it might make you feel better, for

if your mother talked to him like that I—I guess it worried you—" (I stammered terribly over it; it was so hard to say anything that sounded even half right)

"I talked that way too," said Viola. I couldn't say anything to that. So I began to sew in my collar.

"He hated the hyphenated name!" said Viola. I finished sewing in my collar and began on my last cuff.

"I don't mind the money, but I have to think of it—what shall I do? I hate sponging. I will say I *always* hated it! Mother can go visit people—and she will—but I—I *can't!*"

"Why don't you work?" I asked.

She looked at me hard. "What would I do?" she asked after several moments of scrutiny.

"Accompany," I answered. "Even Devil Paggi" (I am ashamed to say that we called him that sometimes) "says you can do that—"

"Yes—" Viola answered in a funny, low voice.

"He said he'd get any of us positions," I went on, "and touring with a great singer wouldn't be bad—"

That captured her!

"Basses are always fat," she said; "I hope to goodness it will be a tenor!" Which was a whole lot like Viola, and a joke that I didn't appreciate then, for when Viola—who did learn to accompany

really beautifully—got her position, it was with a fat German contralto who had five children, a fat poodle dog that Viola had to chaperon a great deal of the time, and a temper that Viola had to suffer, or—leave!

I stood up a little time after that, and as I stepped into the corridor I met Leslie, who was taking a letter out for Beata to mail.

"Look here," I said, as I swung into step by her, and we reached the hall near the entrance door, "Viola had a letter from her mother, and her father hasn't left much—"

"How ghastly!"

"Well," I said, "I don't know. . . . It may help Viola—"

"I'll lend her anything she needs—any amount," said Leslie, and then I spoke.

"Please *don't,*" I begged. She drew herself up.

"Will you be good enough to explain?" she said frigidly, and I did. I said that, unless she intended to support Viola all her life, she had no business to get Viola into the habit of taking and expecting, and I went on to say that it was the one chance for Viola to learn to work, and that she would be helped through her trouble *by* work. I was sure she would, and I was sure that Leslie oughtn't to help her, and I spoke with a lot of energy.

Leslie didn't like it—Rome wasn't built in a

day!—and then she said that when she needed my expert advice she'd call for it, and that she didn't intend to see Viola starve; and after that, we parted.

At dinner that night she was frosty as James Whitcomb Riley's famed pumpkins, but I could see by Viola's careless manner (Viola always paid a great deal of attention to Leslie *after* she borrowed money) that Leslie hadn't spoken to her of her willingness to help.

For a couple of days Leslie avoided making real conversation with me, and then one morning while I was practising I looked up to see Leslie in the doorway.

She had on a French blue negligee that had pale two-toned pink ribbons on it, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright, and she carried a tray on which was a pot of tea, some little cakes that she knows I like, and some biscuits. She always got her own breakfast because the pension allowance was small, and she knew that I was always hungry until after lunch.

"Here!" she said, as she set it down on a chair by me. "Suppose you're starved as usual. I, myself, am entirely certain that the scant breakfasts stunt the race—I'm *certain* that it makes them short—I want to say several things—"

I began to eat. "Go ahead," I said, in a tone that I must confess was muffled.

"In the first place—you, ah, you were right about Viola." (I almost fainted, but I bit into a biscuit and held on to consciousness) "I see it now. Then—this afternoon I am going out to buy a wedding present for Beata, and I want you to go with me; can you?"

"If you'll wait till I get through practising—" I answered.

"Certainly, that's understood. *Have* to with you—" (She always resented and never understood why my first thought *had* to be music) "And another thing," she went on, and she fumbled in the front of her negligee to find a cablegram, "I've heard from him—"

I took it and read it.

"He must have cared a lot to write those two pleases in a cablegram," I said.

She nodded and tried not to smile, but the inclination was so much stronger than her ability to hold it in check, that she smiled in a silly, ashamed sort of way, and she avoided meeting my eyes.

Ben Forbes had cabled, "Thank you. Letter follows. Please please write me again."

"I thought I'd get Beata a silver coffee service," said Leslie, who can't seem to accommodate to other people's circumstances.

"She'd never use that," I said. "You might as well get her a wooden leg or a pair of stilts! I'd get her some horrible picture, or candlesticks for

their front room, or a lamp with a funny, warty, red and green shade—"

"You're right," she said, and then she went off. She kissed her fingers to me from the doorway, and again she smiled in that misty, vacant way.

I practised hard, for that afternoon I had a lesson, and it was that afternoon that Signor Paggi began to be most kind to me.

"You have more *feel* in the tune," he said. (I was very happy) "I think Cu*peed* have come to make you *see*—" he went on.

"Not to me," I said, "but to some one I like—"

"Have as you will," he stated, "but play again, for me—"

And I did. And as I did, I thought of how Sam had looked when he heard me practise that very same music at the Pension Dante. He had said it was beautiful, and it had helped me.

Friendship is a wonderful thing!

CHAPTER TWENTY

A COUNTRY WEDDING AND THE COMING OF SPRING

A GREAT deal happened in that slice of time which carried us from January into spring, although during that interval we felt as if we were going along almost entirely on the level. You never really do see the things that happen—not well—until you can look at them over your shoulder. I realize now that there was lots of excitement, and that there was really a good deal of abrupt change, but I didn't see it then.

In the first place, we all went to Beata's wedding in February, and I never did have a better time.

Her family, who numbered fourteen—with her father and mother, and Grandmother and Grandfather, and nine brothers and sisters—lived in a four room house out in the country past the Cascine, which is the Park in Florence where fashionable people and those who are trying very hard to become fashionable, drive each afternoon. I didn't like it; it didn't seem very foreign or Italian. But to go on with my story, an American—or most Americans—would have hesitated

about inviting people to a wedding party in a four room house that was simply crammed with children, not to mention the sick hen and the sheep with a broken leg, but it didn't bother Beata! No, sir, she meant to have a party, and she had it, and I thought her asking every one she wanted *fine.* She said, through Miss Julianna, who interpreted, "You know we are poor, but we have great love in our hearts for you, and would like to share what we have with you. And will you do us the great honor to come to my wedding, hear the mass that will follow, and then eat with us the grand dinner at the house of my dearly loved father?"

Every one accepted, and on the morning of the fourteenth—which was the date Leslie had chosen for Beata's wedding in honor of a certain Saint who swells the mails on this day each year—we all started out toward Beata's home. Leslie, who was increasingly kind and thoughtful, had hired a big motor which would, with a little squeezing, hold us all; and into this piled Miss Julianna, Miss Meek (she wore the purple velvet with the green buttons again) Miss Bannister who had never set foot in a motor before and was pale from fear (her fright lasted about a block, and then she got so jazzy that we almost had to tell her not to rock the boat) Viola, with a wide black band around her arm (Leslie had suggested that

to save Viola's buying new black clothes) and Leslie, Mr. Hemmingway and myself.

The riding out was great fun, for the day was fine, and Miss Meek and Miss Bannister and Mr. Hemmingway were having such a good time that we were all infected with it.

Mr. Hemmingway talked *every* second about the first time he had ever seen a motor, which was in Australia, he *thought* in Sidney, although oddly enough he could, in retrospect, only see the corner where the motor stood; and, all corners being pretty much the same, it *might* have been in Melbourne. And he thought it was in 1889, although it might have been in 1888—and so on!

Miss Meek kept saying, "My *eye,* how *jolly!*" and Miss Bannister, who, as I said, lost all fear after a block of going, kept asking if the chauffeur couldn't "speed it up a bit." She admitted that she was "no end keen for going, don't you know!"

When we reached the little house, I was so glad that Beata had asked us, because we saw, through her doing so, a side of life that we hadn't come across before.

The house, which was of tan stucco with the usual, red tiled roof, stood on a tiny plot of ground over which were strewn all sorts of things. A broken cart, with one wheel gone, sagged in a corner, and near the tiny, shed-like barn, through

the window of which an interested horse stuck its head, was a grindstone. Ground-scratching hens, who chattered in gentle clucks to their puffy, soft broods, walked in the house and out again as they pleased, and a red rooster stood on a crumbling stucco wall that was topped with broken glass, to flap his wings and crow. . . . Down back of the house every inch of ground was terraced, for it seems that it is best used that way on hillsides, and because of this the Italian country, in most places, looks like unending flights of green-grown steps. Up under the eaves was a really beautiful figure of Christ nailed on the cross, and when people passed below that they bowed and crossed themselves.

Of course the sun was over everything, and there were some smells that weren't exactly pleasant, but the whole place was pleasing, and a lot of its picturesque look came from the disorder and dirt.

And the guests! They were all dressed in their peasant best, and were laughing and joking, and telling Beata that they wished her many, strong children—this is quite a proper wish in Italy, and I really don't know why it shouldn't be anywhere; but people *would* think it queer, I suppose, if you said it at a wedding in Pennsylvania, or in New York—and before we started for the church, which was down in the valley below us, we all joined

hands and circled Beata and Pietro who stood in the center, holding hands and smiling at each other shyly. Then every one sung while we did this and it was very pretty to hear and to see and to join in.

Then we went, arm in arm, down a winding way, over slopes that were grown with small, gently green olive trees, or between fields of green that were already beginning to show the brightest growing hue; past a high-walled villa, and several tumbling houses of the poor. And whenever we met a person, or a group of them, they—knowing Beata or not—would call out a blessing upon the pair, and then stand, heads uncovered, until we had gone from sight. . . . There is something very warming in the frankness of the Italians' hearts; I think perhaps, in the United States, we keep our hearts too heavily covered.

In the church many candles were burning, and there was a little boy swinging an incense pot, and it was dark and cool and mysterious, after all the blaze of the sunshine outdoors. I liked the service—in spite of the fact that it was very long—and I enjoyed seeing how it was done.

After it was over, we went back to Beata's father's house to find the little lame brother (who was getting better all the time) waiting for us at the gate—he had seemed glad to stay with the Grandmother—and Beata kissed him first, and

then her Grandmother, and every one talked and laughed and joked. And then the refreshments, which were black bread, bright orange cheese, figs, and wine, were passed, and they did taste good.

Just before we left a new guest came, and she carried the tiniest baby I had ever seen, which was only three days old, and I was very much surprised when I found out it was hers; because Daddy always makes the mothers of babies stay in bed at least two weeks, and sometimes much longer. But it seems that all the peasants get up after two or three days, and when this woman said she had had to miss the wedding because of doing a big wash, I was more surprised, but very glad she came, for she let me hold the baby, who was named Leo Paolo Giovanni Battista Vincenzo Negri, and was *so* cunning.

When the shadows were beginning to grow long and turn purple, we started back toward Florence, which lay before us in its valley cup, with all its spires and towers gilded by the last, yellow-gold sunlight.

I felt a little sad, going in; I don't know why, unless perhaps it was because Miss Bannister and Miss Meek and Mr. Hemmingway had had so fine a time, and I kept wondering, as they talked—excitedly and as fast as they could and all at once—what they would do after we left.

But Fate and Mr. Wake helped them.

Early in March I heard from Miss Sheila that she would be in Florence some time during April, but I didn't tell Mr. Wake of this, for since that day at Certosa we hadn't talked much of Miss Sheila. And the very same day that I heard that, Leslie came to me, with one of the big, square envelopes in her hand that came so often since she had written Ben Forbes.

"Ben Forbes is coming over," she stated.

"Isn't that *dandy?*" I answered. I had been practising; I had added an hour and was doing five a day, at that time.

"I think so," she said, looking down.

"Has he ever been here before?" I asked, and she responded quickly and with a little remnant of her old irritation in her voice.

"Heavens, *yes,* child!" she replied, "*dozens* of times, of course! But not lately. He says he realizes that he has been keeping himself too tightly moored, and that he wants a few weeks of real play. . . . He wants me to plan the whole time for him—"

"Well," I said, "I think that's *great!* What are you going to do?"

"Oh, take him to the Boboli Gardens, and that sort of thing—he likes outdoors and isn't too keen for pictures—and we'll walk. . . . Where is that

little place where you buy cakes, down in that covered street near the Arno?''

It seemed queer to have her ask that—I remembered so clearly her saying that she thought *eating in alleys* odd—but I didn't remind her, and I told her about that, and about a place where you could get the best white wine, and then of a restaurant where Sam had taken me that was always full of Italian artists, and writers and poets, and where you never saw the gleam of a red Baedeker.

''He likes that sort of thing,'' Leslie confided, ''and I want him to have a good time—''

''Of course,'' I answered.

She sighed, and then smiled in a sort of a foolish way. ''It'll be nice to see him,'' she said weakly.

''I should think it would be,'' I answered.

''He's thirty-three,'' she said, ''but what's ten years?'' (Leslie is twenty-three)

''Nothing,'' I stated. It was easy to say the right thing to her that day, for she put up a sign post at every turn.

''I think a man should be older than a woman—'' said Leslie. I suppose she meant husband and wife.

''I do too,'' I agreed, and did an arpeggio.

''Hear about Viola?'' she asked, as she leaned against the piano.

"No." I stopped and looked up as she spoke.

"Paggi had a note from a German contralto—she's pretty well known too—Madame Heilbig; and she wants a young accompanist, and Signor P. has recommended Vi. . . . Viola's to try out with the lady next week when she goes through here, and I believe Madame Heilbig will tour the States next year. . . . Viola will *love* that. She's already planning what she will wear. . . . Do you remember how she expected to accompany a slim tenor with pretty brown eyes?"

I did, and I laughed.

Leslie laughed too, but not as kindly as I had—really she didn't—for she and Viola, in spite of being friends again, still held a scratchy feeling toward each other.

"Nothing ever turns out as I expect it to," said Leslie, "I'm beginning to get over being surprised about anything. . . . Do you think a man would like that flower toque of mine?"

"He will unless he's blind," I replied, and then I told her to get out, because I had to go on with my work, but I didn't have much time alone, for in a second Viola appeared.

"*Darling,*" she called from the doorway, "have you *heard* the *news?*"

I gave up then; I had to.

"Not your version of it," I answered; and she

came skipping across the room to drop on a chair near me, and babble. There is no other description of it! She was so excited that she hardly stopped for breath.

"I'm going to get that position!" she announced, "it'll do me *worlds* of good—" (It did!) "And mother is satisfied to stay with Aunt Clarice —she entertains all the time, you know—and I am going to wear an orchid chiffon frock, made up over silver cloth, perhaps, and Signor Paggi says I will sometimes be expected to bow too, and that Madame Heilbig will pay me well, and I mean to save—because Leslie says all her income comes from money her father saved—it is the only safety for a single woman, and capital is really the husband of an old maid, don't you know? Or would you wear lavender? I thought of a brocade, and I could wear artificial violets because they would look like real ones back of the footlights, and with my name, they might be sort of romantic, and I can wear violet too, and—"

I sat and listened, and honestly she went on for a half hour like that. Then she said, "Hear about Ben Forbes?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Simply *romantic!*"

"Um hum—"

"Taking him to the Boboli Gardens, and all that

—*artful,* you know. . . . *Think* of having a proposal in one of those arched-over pathways in that heavenly place! *Oh!*"

"Probably won't," I said.

"He will too," Viola disagreed, "*she'll fix it!* . . . Look here, did you hear about his cook?"

I hadn't, and I said so quickly, because I was interested.

"In the letter before this last one," said Viola, "I think it came yesterday, he told Leslie—oh, in detail, my dear!—about his ranch, and the way the ranch house looked and all that. Made it *frightfully* attractive, told her about the patio, what *is* a patio, anyway?"

"Enclosed court," I answered, "I think they have them in some of the ranch houses in the southwest. They are sort of Mexican—"

"I see; well, he told her about that, and about how the sunsets looked on the mountains, it was a perfect *love* of a letter, but what I was getting at was this—he said he had a one-eyed Chinese cook who could spit eight feet. Can you imagine Leslie with *that?*"

I laughed. It did seem awfully funny.

Viola laughed too, but as Leslie had, which was not in an entirely kind way, and then she went on to say almost exactly what Leslie had said about her.

"It'll be the *making* of her," she said (and it

was!), "but I never would have believed she would allow herself to care for a man who lives in the middle of nowhere. However, *nothing* turns out as one expects it to. I guess I ought to leave you?"

"You ought to," I agreed, "but I don't suppose you will—"

"Oh, do come have tea with me," said Leslie from the doorway, and I gave up. We went to her room to find her bed covered with the veils which she had been trying on over her flowered toque.

"A woman *should* look her best," she said, but she flushed and avoided looking at us as she said it.

"When will he be here?" asked Viola.

"Who?" asked Leslie coolly, but something made her drop the shoe horn with which she was measuring out the tea, and then knock a cream puff from a heavy piece of china that had been designed to hold soap.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FIESOLE, A CLEAR HOT DAY AND A COOL GARDEN

APRIL came in as gently and softly as a month could possibly come, and it held more loveliness than I had ever dreamed could be. The sun was growing too warm and, some days, the heat was oppressive and going out unwise; but most of the days were flawless jewels that began with brown which merged into green, topped and finished with the blue, blue sky.

It was in the second week in April that we went up to Fiesole, that proud little town that perches on a high hill, and looks down so scornfully on the Florence that has always made war upon her.

I had been there before with Sam, and we had gone up the winding road, to the place where there are relics of Roman baths and the remains of a Roman Temple and an open, half-circled Roman theater. But that had been in the winter, and now it was spring!

Viola and I went up alone, for Leslie was out somewhere with Ben Forbes, who had arrived the night before. And all the way up Viola talked of Leslie's getting married—and she wasn't even

engaged then—and of what she, Viola, would wear while *en tour,* which was what she called her traveling with Madame Heilbig—who had liked her playing, and instantly engaged her—and of how she, Viola, intended to go on and some day accompany some one who was really great, while I looked out at the country which was *so* beautiful.

I didn't mind Viola's talking very much, although I would have been glad to look on all that loveliness in silence, but I was glad, when we reached Fiesole—which is so high that it seems to cling uncertainly to the top of the hill—and found on reaching there that Viola went off with Mr. Wake, and that I walked with Sam.

"And how's everything?" he asked, after he had smiled down at me in the kindest way, and told me that he liked my broad hat which I had bought at the Mercato Nuovo for five lire which is now about twenty-five cents.

"Better and better," I answered, and then I told him all the news, as I always did when we met. We met a good deal too, but there always seemed to be a lot to say. It is like that when you are real friends.

"Miss Bannister," I said, "has had luck. A nephew of hers has lost his wife, which is hard on him, but fine for Miss Bannister, because he wants her to come to Devonshire and live in his house, and attend to giving the cook and what Miss Ban-

nister calls 'the scullery maid' their orders. And he sent her ten pounds—how much is that, Sam?"

"About fifty hard bones, dear," he answered. (I was quite used to his calling me "dear," and I liked it)

"Well, that is all for clothes," I stated, "and I'm going to help her buy them."

"Can you get more than one frock with that?" asked Sam, and I told him that she certainly could, for only the day before Leslie and I had shopped. She had helped me to buy the things I was going to take home to Mother, Roberta, the twins, and Daddy, and we had got lovely things at most reasonable prices. Hand-embroidered, hand-made night dresses could be bought for a dollar and a half; waist patterns wonderfully embroidered, for two dollars; laces (and the laces were *beautiful*), for about half what one would pay at home—I had bought Mother a set of broad Irish lace collars and cuffs for four dollars—and quite everything was like that, one paid less, and got more.

"Leslie got uncurled ostrich feather fans for some of her friends," I went on, "she said for half what she would have to pay for the cheapest at home—they were twelve and fifteen dollars, I think—and she got leather frames and hand-bound books too, that were beautiful." Then I told Sam that I had found for Father a hand-

tooled card case that I wanted him to see, and he said he wanted to, and then he said he was miserable.

"Why?" I asked, and he told me because I was going away.

"That won't stop our being friends," I answered, and I pretended a cheerfulness that I really didn't feel.

"No," he answered, "it mustn't. I'm going to work hard," he continued, "and I'm coming over to New York in a year or so for a one man show—" (I suppose I looked as if I didn't understand—for I didn't—and he explained) "That means," he said, "an exhibition of my work, all by itself—Mr. Wake, bless him, thinks I can swing it, and when I come over I'll come to see you. But you knew that, didn't you?"

"Will you *really?*" I questioned, because I did want to be very sure, and he said he really would.

"But then," I said, "you'll probably go again—"

"Um, probably. . . . I used to travel with a banjo tucked under one arm, and a palette under the other. . . . But I see where, in a couple of years, things are going to be more complicated, *if I can manage what I want to—*"

I didn't understand him, but I let it go, because Mr. Wake and Viola had come out of the Cathedral which dominates the wind-swept Piazza at

Fiesole, and Mr. Wake came over to tell Sam to take me in and show me the bust of a Bishop and his monument that were made by Mino da Fiesole, and that Mr. Wake liked very much.

We went in, past the beggars who sat on the steps with open, upturned palms, past an old lady who was selling baskets, and swore at us dreadfully when we refused to buy them—among her swearing was a curse which consists of "Darn the fishes," and that is very, very wicked in Italian!—and then, inside we saw the—Sarcophagus, Sam called it, and loitered around, and then went back out into the glare and stifling heat that was over everything outside.

We found Mr. Wake and Viola across the big Piazza, loitering in the shade, and Mr. Wake said that it was too hot for anything but his own shady garden and iced tea, and so we left the funny, pretty little town and started down a narrow roadway that ran between high walls, or slopes that were covered with olive trees.

Every color was accentuated. . . . Houses that were faint pink, seemed salmon; greens almost clashed; the dust of the roadway was a vivid yellow, and down in the hollow below us, Florence spread out, a steaming, gleaming mass of tightly packed palaces, shining spires, and gleaming towers.

"Ah, Giotto," said Mr. Wake, as we halted at

a bend in the way and looked down at our own city. He said this, for he loved the tower that Giotto had planned and had seen half built before his death. "Ever hear," said Mr. Wake, "of how the little Giotto was found, and how he was helped to become the great artist that he was?"

I hadn't, and I said so. Viola thought she had, but she said she forgot so *many* things, when Mr. Wake questioned her a little.

"Well," he said, "since Viola has forgotten, and Jane frankly admits she doesn't know, indulge an old man in his love of the telling of picturesque stories."

"I *love* them," I said, for I really did. His stories were about people who had lived and died, and they never had Irish or Hebrew or Swedish people in them to make him try a dialect. I don't care so very much for that sort. And Mr. Wake didn't even *try* to be funny, which is unusual in a man.

"Well," he said, as he took off his hat and mopped his brow, "one day when Cimabue, who was a great artist, and a fine chap, was strolling through the country he came to a clearing in which a little boy was tending sheep. And perhaps because he was in an ill humor—probably thinking all art was going to the bad, for he was a critic too, you know, and critics have thought that since the beginning of paint—anyway, I feel

that an ill humor set upon him, and that he was, because of it, minded to stop, and divert himself by talking a bit to a little country lad.

"And he said 'Hello,' in Italian of course, and the little boy answered 'Master, I salute you—' and Cimabue drew near. And when near, he looked down at a rock upon which the little boy had drawn a picture with a bit of soft, crumbling stone. The picture was good, and Cimabue felt a thrill sweep over him—the selfsame sort of thrill that I feel when Sam shows my dull eyes a bit of his genius—and he took the little boy with him, after he saw his people, and the little boy grew up to paint pictures of *people*. Before he painted—early in thirteen hundred, legend has it, all the pictures had been of stiff, remote, too holy Saints. But little Giotto, who had learned love and wisdom of the fields and trees and birds and beasts, painted Madonnas who smiled, and little babies who held out their arms to be taken, and proud Josephs who seem to say, 'Please look at *my* family.' . . . Painted, what Ruskin called, 'Mamma and Papa and the baby.' . . . I thank you, ladies and gentleman," he ended, with mock ceremony, "for your kind attention!"

Then he paused outside of a wall that had once been pink, but had been washed by the rain and faded by sun until it was only a faint peach in a few sheltered spots, and here he rang a bell.

Soon after he did this, a girl opened the gate for us, greeted Mr. Wake and us all with real sweetness, and we trooped into his garden. And I was glad to see it, for I loved Mr. Wake and I wanted to see where he lived, but I would have enjoyed it in any case, for it was—without exception—the prettiest place I had ever seen.

There were high walls all around it except on the side that looked down upon Florence. Here the view was interrupted, rather edged, by groups of tall, slender cypress trees, and here was a low, marble balustrade. . . . There were vines and clumps of foliage, and in the center of the lower terrace a little fountain with a laughing cupid in its center. . . . And there were wicker chairs with hoods on them—Sam said that they were called beach chairs—and there was a yellow awning with a bright blue star on it, which had once been the sail of a Venetian fishing craft. . . . I cannot describe it. . . . While I was there I could only feel it, and hope I wouldn't wake. . . . I sank down in a chair that had a footstool near it, and looked down the green hillside, toward the city of towers.

"Like it?" asked Sam, as he dropped on the footstool, and after my nod, lit a cigarette.

"Oh," I murmured.

"Didn't exaggerate, did I?" he went on.

"No," I answered, "you *couldn't.*" Then Mr. Wake came up, followed by Viola who was mur-

muring, "En*chant*ing," "A*dor*able," and "Too *heav*enly," one right after the other. And after he had come to stand smiling down at me, I mentioned Miss Sheila for the first time.

"Mr. Wake," I said, "My fairy godmother would love this more than I can say. It'll seem strange to you, but she has talked to me of a place like this. She *really* has."

"Look here," said Mr. Wake to Sam, "you and Viola go hunt up some tea, will you—"

And Sam said, "Of course," and stood up.

"And show Viola your last picture," Mr. Wake added, "and *take your time to it!*"

"Yes, *Sir,*" said Sam, and very nicely, considering the fact that he and Viola don't get on very well.

After he had gone, Mr. Wake took out his cigarette case and lit a cigarette, and then sat down on the end of a chaise longue.

"My dear," he said, "I've a long story to tell you. . . . And you must be kind and remember that it is the first time I have ever told it, and that —the telling it is hard because—I care so—deeply. . . . But I guess you'd best know, and why I don't want to meet your—your Miss Sheila. I believe you'd best know, for you will wonder why I am so rude, if I don't explain. . . . The garden, by the way, is the kind Miss Sheila would like because—long, long years ago—when I was young in heart

and body—she talked of a garden like this, to me —her lover."

He paused to stare down upon Florence for some moments, and then, after he had drawn a deep breath, he went on.

"About twenty years ago," he said, "when I was a boy, and named Terrence O'Gilvey—and right off the the sod, Jane—I came to New York. I had done a bit of writing or two, even then, and I went on a paper; and, because of my Irish manner I think, my little things took. Anyway, the first thing I knew a well-known newspaper man named Ford, and then the Danas and some others began to believe in me and to be kind to me, and I knew I had got hold of the first rung anyway, and I was mighty happy. I thought I was as happy as any man could be until I met Sheila Parrish, and then I was in hell . . . and yet . . . happier than I had ever been before—and, faith, all because I was so deep in love with her!

"It was a quick business, Jane. She smiled gently, and I was gone. I wanted to get down and let her use my vest for a doormat; I wanted several other things that might seem extravagant to one of your solid small tread and common sense, but none of them were enough extravagant nor enough of an outlet for all that she had taught me to feel.

"Well, she was good to me. And she let me

come to see her, and I sent her posies, and I wrote her what I am afraid were rhymes, and no more—but by all the Saints, child, what I felt! And then one day Heaven opened, and she—she stretched out her lovely hands to me, and she said, 'You are more than a dear Irish boy, Terry; I believe you are a man, and I believe I will listen to your story—' "

He stopped speaking, and I put my hand out, and laid it on his—I was *so* sorry for him!

For a moment we sat like this, and then he went on.

"She had a younger brother," he said, "God rest his soul! He was bad—as reckless and vicious a youth as has ever been my unhappy fortune to see, and how *he hurt Sheila.* I saw it, and I suffered a thousand times for her. I'd find her with tears on her cheeks, and know that some new devilishness had cropped out. And I railed, as youth will rail, Jane, and it drove her from me. . . . When, (a long story this, but I can't seem to shorten it) after she had set the date for our wedding, her younger brother was found to have tuberculosis, and she said that I must wait, while she went west with him and fought with him for health, I lost control of every brake I had, and I went to pieces.

"And well, I remember it! Her standing in

the high ceilinged drawing room of the old New York home, and saying, 'Well, Terry, if you make me choose, I can do only one thing. I cannot evade duty. My brother may not last a year—' and I turned and went—

"And the next day I wrote her, but I had no answer. And that was the end of it, and of everything, and you see, now, why I can't—meet her."

"Why did you change your name?" I asked. I am too dull to say the appropriate thing, so I usually ask or say what I really want to.

"An Uncle wanted to adopt me . . . . He was a lonely old chap; I had no one, and I thought he was mighty pathetic, until he died and left me a more than fair sized fortune, (A great thing to have, Jane, by the way, if you've a fancy for writing books!) and then, well I thought he was a humbug, but I was grateful, and I have been ever since—"

He stood up and smiled down at me. No one who hadn't known him for long would have thought his smile stiff, or forced, but I knew that it was.

"But are you over caring for her?" I asked. "I didn't know if it were very real, that it would change—"

"I am not," he answered, "what you term 'over it,' and there is no changing for me, but for my

peace I think less of it and of the hopes that the boy named Terrence O'Gilvey sent up to his gods."

Then, Viola and Sam came wandering back to stand on the upper terrace uncertainly, and Mr. Wake called to them.

"Come on down," he said, "we're ready for our tea—"

And then a maid who wore a scarlet waist, and a black skirt with scarlet bands around it, a little white cap on her head, and a Roman striped scarf around her waist, came toward us with a big tray which she set on a table that Sam brought up.

It was very, very pretty. . . . But it suddenly seemed hollow. . . . I wondered whether it were always hollow for Mr. Wake. . . . And I thought how nice it would be if pretty Miss Sheila were smiling at him from across the table, and knew, without asking, how many lumps of sugar he would take, and whether his tea should be strong or weak.

"How many loads," asked Sam as he picked up the sugar spoon.

"Two for me," I answered.

"None," said Viola who is afraid of fat.

"Where is Leslie?" asked Mr. Wake who had evidently just noticed her absence.

"In the Boboli gardens," answered Viola, on a guess that later proved correct.

"Hum—hope she drove over. Aren't they warning people at the bridges to-day?" he ended, with a questioning look toward Sam who had gone down to the town that morning. (On very hot days sentinels, who stand at the entrance to the bridges, warn people against crossing them, for it is a risk to do this during the middle hours of the day)

"No," Sam replied, "I wandered over the Ponte Vecchio without a word from any one—"

"The real heat will come soon," Mr. Wake prophesied. "Think," he went on, I'll go to Switzerland in June."

"Poor Miss Meek," I put in, "hates the heat so and has to stay here—"

"Pshaw," said Mr. Wake, "that is too bad—Look here," he said quickly, after a second's pause, "I have some Italian friends who want a governess; I believe they are going to Viareggio for the hot months. Would she touch that?"

"She'd *love* it," I answered quickly, "she's wanted a post for ages, but it's so hard to get one now, since every one's so poor from the war—"

"And fancy the little Italian beggars saying, 'My eye! How jolly,' " put in Sam.

Every one laughed. "Won't hurt 'em," said Mr. Wake easily, "for they won't know it's not top notch proper and the latest thing! I'll talk

to Lucca to-morrow, and after that I'll let you know, Jane. Believe I can fix it—"

And he did.

I thought of him a lot going down. So much that Sam thought I felt badly from the heat. But the heat hadn't made my depression. I had so wanted Miss Sheila and Mr. Wake to know and like each other. They were both lonely, and I loved them both and they seemed alike and suited to like each other in lots of ways. And I could tell that Mr. Wake needed Miss Sheila from the manner in which he had talked of her at the beginning of our friendship. And now it was all over; I could never present my dear friend to her, nor talk of my Fairy Godmother to him!

It did seem all wrong, but as Leslie and Viola both said, things turn out as one doesn't expect them to.

I had hoped—of course it was silly—but I had hoped a lot. And now even my chance for hoping had disappeared.

"Are you sure," asked Sam, "that the heat hasn't done you up?"

"Sure," I answered dully.

"He's wild over you," said Viola as we toiled up the stairs that we had come to call "The last, long mile." . . . We had sent Sam off at the door, because he had to walk back to the Piazza del Duomo again to get his car, and the town was

still heavy and sultry with the heat that the day had held.

"Nonsense!" I answered sharply.

"Yes, he is. We might have a double wedding—"

I was furious.

"I'm going home to play the organ in the First Presbyterian Church," I stated, "and to give music lessons, and I won't have time to get married for *years!*"

She laughed.

"I'm only eighteen," I added, and with resentment.

"I'll bet on twenty for you," she said teasingly.

"Not before I'm twenty-one," I answered before I thought, and then I grew pink. Viola laughed, as Maria, the new maid, opened the door for us. "Oh, he'll get you," she prophesied, "and he'll court you divinely. . . . It's plain that he doesn't like me, but I like and admire him in spite of it. . . . And you know lots of women go right along with their careers after marriage."

I didn't answer that, but I did know that if I ever did marry, my first thought would be to follow, as nearly as I could, the fine career my Mother had had and to make my husband as comfortable and as happy as Mother had made Father. For I feel that that should come first.

"I wish you wouldn't," I said, sharply, after

we had gone in the cool, dim corridor, "I don't want to have to think about it yet."

"Sorry," she said. And I said I was sorry I had been cross. Then the Pension door opened again, and Leslie, followed by a tall, bronzed man, came in. I liked his looks, and I was reassured for him, after I met him, for he had something of Leslie's manner—an almost lordly, commanding, I-want-what-I-want-when-I-want-it-and-I-intend-to-get-it air. I think a good many people who have had *too* much money and have been able to issue *too* many orders get that. But if Leslie was going to marry him—and I found soon she was—I knew he would need it.

He stayed for dinner and was very charming to every one, but most charming to Leslie and after he left, Leslie came to my room to talk.

"Well?" she questioned from the doorway.

"I like him," I answered, as she came toward me.

"I love him," she said, and she said it as sensibly and openly as I had ever heard her say anything, "and," she continued, "he is going to let me marry him."

I laughed, and she joined me.

"It isn't a joke," she stated after a moment.

"I know it," I answered.

"He said he had been worried ever since that New York visit, over hurting me," she went on,

"and that, when I dismissed him, he realized he had been stupid in not knowing before that I had grown up. And he said, when he realized I was grown up, that he suddenly began to care for me in a different way. And you know how I feel—"

(She fumbled for a pink linen handkerchief, wiped her eyes and then blew her nose)

"And when I told him I'd cried over him, it almost killed him, but—he liked it," she ended.

I knew he would have liked it, because men all do thoroughly enjoy hearing about women who cry because they love them (the men) which seems funny when you consider that, if the same men see them cry, they almost have a fit and are *far* from comfortable. But, as I read in some book, Life is one vast riddle.

"I'm very happy," said Leslie, as she stood up. And I said I was very glad and that I hoped she would keep on being so even after she was married and settled down. And she said she expected to, and then she said, in a quick, remembering way, "Oh—" and brought out an unstamped note that was addressed to me by Miss Sheila.

"Ben brought this," she said, "I think from New York; anyway he saw Aunt Sheila somewhere—" and then she left, and I, alone, read the note, which held surprising and nice news for me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A WALK ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON

MISS SHEILA was at the Convent of San Girolamo, which is a hospital that is managed by nuns, at Fiesole. And she had written me about her plan to go there before the ship landed.

"I was very stupid and caught a little cold,"

(I saw in her pretty hand. Later I found out that she had come as close to pneumonia as any one can!)

"and the ship's doctor thinks I should rest a little while. So I am going to San Girolamo where I spent a few happy weeks when I was a girl and half ailing, and you, dear child, must come to see me there. I am going to ask you not to tell Leslie I am here just now. I am very much ashamed to confess it, but the idea of much chatter appals me. Ben—who I imagine may see her!—has promised to keep quiet until I am myself, and ready to join in all the fun. And then—some parties!

"Meanwhile, my dear, only your quiet, small self, and I hope I shall see you soon—Friday? You need not let me know if you can't come then, but if you can, be assured of a warm welcome from your

"Loving

"SHEILA P."

Of course I went, and as soon as I saw Miss Sheila I knew why she was afraid of noise, for it was easy to see that she had been really sick. She was quite as pretty as ever, but her skin looked too transparent and it flushed too easily, and I noticed that small beads of perspiration stood out on her smooth forehead and short upper lip, simply from the little exertion and excitement of seeing me. As soon as I noticed that, I talked, very slowly and steadily, about the valley that lay below us, and I didn't look at her until, after a silence, she said:

"Jane—you are rather a marvelous child, do you know it? And a great comfort. You have what made your mother the best nurse I have ever known, a great deal of real *understanding.*"

Well, I didn't agree with her, and I knew she was too kind, but I *did* have enough understanding of her stretched, weak, shaky feeling to know that it wasn't the time to say—as Leslie or Viola would —"How perfectly *sweet* of you! I am *enchanted! Nothing* could please me more! But *why* did you say that? *Won't* you explain?"

Instead I said "Thank you," which may have given the impression that I accepted all she said—however, that didn't matter; the thing that mattered was getting her to sit back in her deck chair and lose her wound up feeling and really rest.

"How is it going?" she asked, after I had asked

the name of a big monastery that lay about half way down the hill below us.

"Very well," I answered, "Mother wrote me that the music committee of the Presbyterian Church are going to employ a substitute until I come back; that they told Daddy I was really engaged. And Signor Paggi is going to see that I have some lessons from an organist here to freshen me up—I took organ lessons at home, you know—and no end of people tell Mother that they are going to take lessons from me, and it's all very satisfactory, and so wonderful that sometimes I can't believe it is true!"

Miss Sheila smiled at me, said a warm, "Dear *child!*" and then I could feel her draw into a shell. I think that she was afraid I would try to thank her for all that she'd done, and that she wasn't equal to it. So I said, very quickly, "It's a nice day, isn't it?" and she answered with relief.

Then a sweet-faced sister came toward us between the rose bushes which made a narrow path of the terrace up to the open spot where we sat. She carried a cup of chocolate for Miss Sheila, and she wanted to get one for me, but I wouldn't let her. Then she said, "Drink this, dear," to Miss Sheila; asked if she were tired, looked at me searchingly, and then smiled and gave my shoulder a little pat, and went off in her gentle, smooth way.

"They are so kind," said Miss Sheila, "and sometimes I think that this is the most beautiful spot in the world."

I didn't blame her for thinking so, (though her thinking so confessed that she hadn't seen Mr. Wake's garden) for the place is most lovely. It is, in some way connected with Cosimo I, it is said, and the Medici coat of arms is to be found around in different spots. It is a very old building, and it is, like everything else on the hillside, perched on the slant with all its lovely gardens planted on steps. And down below spreads out the country with little blazing yellow roadways, and pink and tan villas, and groves of gentle green olive trees, and a church and monastery that often send up the soft sound of bells. . . . And of course the sunshine spreads over everything like a gold mantle, and the little grey-green olive leaves shimmer under every small breeze that comes along, and sometimes the song of a peasant girl rises. . . . And of course there were rose leaves scattered on the terraces—blown from this or that bush—and the scents of many flowers in the warm soft air.

I can't describe it, but some day some one will describe it, and then he will be able to build a villa that is richer and prouder and larger than another one that the Medicis built out near Fiesole—the one where Queen Victoria often visited—for a

real description would make a real fortune!

"You like it, don't you?" asked Miss Sheila, after she had drunk the chocolate and eaten the small biscuit, and I had set her cup down on the soft, short grass. I nodded. It is hard for me to *say* I like things when I do like them very much.

"It has changed you," said Miss Sheila, "there is a new light in your eyes; the light of dreams, I think—and now tell me about things, your friends, your work, and Signor Paggi—" and I did.

Of course I had to mention Mr. Wake, and each time I did I faltered and grew conscious, although there was no reason for my doing this, since Miss Sheila had not known Terrence Wake, but a boy who was Terrence O'Gilvey.

He came up quite naturally through my hopes for Miss Meek, and Mr. Wake's plan for Mr. Hemmingway—he was going to let Mr. Hemmingway stay in his villa for the summer months, which would be a great treat for any one and heaven for a man who had lived for years in a dull pension—and through his befriending Sam, who was doing so well, and promising to do much more than well.

"How kind your Mr. Wake must be," said Miss Sheila.

"He is," I answered.

"I'd like to meet him," she said.

"He's dreadfully shy," I responded, after that kind of a hard swallow that rasps and scratches as it goes down.

"Heavens, and earth! No man ought to be afraid of an old woman like me!" Miss Sheila mused.

"You aren't old," I put in, and almost sharply. "You have a prettier skin than I have, and as Leslie said, your silver hair simply adds a note of 'chic.' "

Miss Sheila laughed. "That sounds like Leslie," she commented, and that led her to change the subject, for which I was grateful. "Odd, my coming over with Ben Forbes, wasn't it? "

"Yes, wasn't it?"

"Nice man, really. Has something of the Grand Commander manner, but—he'll need it. Splendid arrangement I honestly think. . . . I want to meet your Sam."

"I want you to meet him. But he's not mine," I answered.

"But I hope you'll marry some time," said Miss Sheila. "Go home and work a few years if you like, dear, but if you care for any one, and any one cares for you, don't let any one, or anything stand between you; it doesn't pay." She paused a moment. "But," she continued after this little interval, "if love doesn't come, I think that a profession to which you really belong, and a work that

would expand through your own effort, and so grow more interesting to you all the time—I think that this would be a good insurance against loneliness.''

I looked at her quickly as she spoke of loneliness. She was staring off down below where there was a two wheeled, peasant cart lumbering up a winding hill road; but I felt that she didn't see that, nor even hear the shrill, protesting squeaks that came from the unoiled hubs; and for that moment she came as close to looking tired and faded as I had ever seen her look.

''Sometimes,'' she stated, in the crisp way she occasionally spoke, ''being an old maid is a *lonely* business; especially when one is half ill, Jane, and would like a man to tiptoe into the room and knock over the waste basket, and get off a muffled 'Damn,' and poke the smelling salts at you, and then wheeze out a loudly whispered, 'Feeling *any better?*' ''

Her picture made me smile, but it made me feel *very* sad for her, and it all did seem so useless, when down the hill, not half a mile, Mr. Wake was so lonely, too! But of course I could do nothing about it.

After about an hour with Miss Sheila that day, I stood up, and said I guessed I'd better be going, and Miss Sheila said ''Oh, no, dear!'' But I insisted, and so she kissed me, and I went off, to

pause at the end of that rose sheltered terrace and wave back at her. Then I went through the rest of the garden, and past the little chapel where a sweet-faced young girl knelt before the altar—she was about to take the vows, I heard later—and out through the gate and down the very long, wide, shady stone steps that are guarded on either side by tall cypress trees which, there, seemed like sentinels.

Then—up a little hill to the Piazza at Fiesole, which was wild with a high, hot breeze, and there I took the car that clanged its way down the hillside into sultry Florence.

That day began my visiting Miss Sheila, and I went up to Fiesole by myself four times in the next two weeks, and then again with Viola, and Leslie and Ben Forbes—who seemed to linger on—and it was on that last afternoon that Miss Sheila said, "Bother! Why didn't I think of Sam! I wanted to meet him, and you knew it, Jane! Why didn't you speak of asking him to-day?"

I hadn't thought that she would want him, and I said so, for I had supposed that the party was to be sort of a family affair because of Leslie's and Ben's engagement.

"Well," said Miss Sheila, "no matter. Bring him up Sunday afternoon."

Sunday was a beautiful day in spite of the fact that there was no air stirring and a feeling of

weight over everything. Leslie said she knew it would rain—she was angry over it, because she and Ben had planned to motor in the Cascine and then out somewhere in the country—but I said I thought it wouldn't, *without* rapping on wood; and as I may have said before, it never hurts to rap on wood, whether you are superstitious, or not. But I didn't. Instead, I placed my entire trust in Fate and put on a white lawn dress and the hat I had bought at the Mercato Nuovo which I had trimmed with some flowers that cost very little.

At one I started out with Sam, for he had asked me to go somewhere and have lunch with him before we started up to the Convent on the hillside.

We had a good time over our lunch—which we had in the coolest and most shadowed outdoor café we could find—and Sam ordered the green macaroni which is manufactured in Bologna—and some cold chicken and a salad, and some wine of course, and then a sweet that is very famous in Rome, and wonderfully good. And as we ate we talked the way we always do, which is hard.

Then we stood up, and I brushed the crumbs from my lap, and told Sam that he had a piece of green macaroni on the lapel of his coat, and after that we started toward the Piazza del Duomo, walking slowly and keeping on the shady side of the deep, narrow streets.

In the Piazza Sam bought me a little bunch of blue flowers which were combined with yellow daisies, and I slipped these in under my broad sash, and after that we took the car and began our ride up to Fiesole.

"I'm awfully keen to meet Miss Parrish," said Sam, "because you like her so. She isn't like her niece, is she?"

"Oh, no!" I answered quickly, "not at all!"

"Does she believe in careers for women and all that sort of rot?" asked Sam, as a fat woman who carried a baby and was followed by five children and a poodle dog, got on.

"No," I answered, and then I told him what Miss Sheila had advised.

"Going to take her advice?" asked Sam, and he turned in the seat and leaned way over me until he could see under the brim of my broad hat.

"I don't know," I answered, although I did, all suddenly and at that minute.

"*Don't* you?" he repeated, "Oh, *Jane!*"

And he looked so miserable—he really did—that I said I did know. And then I looked out of the window, although there wasn't much to see just at that point except a tan stucco wall, with pink and blue tiles set in it.

"You're too young to bother," said Sam, as he plaited the end of my sash which I had been care-

ful not to sit on because I didn't want it crushed, "but when you get along to the age when I *dare* court you, I'll tell *you*—" he drew a deep breath—"*Well,* you'll see!" he ended, in a half threatening way.

I didn't answer that.

"And if I hear of your *looking* at anybody else," he went on, "I'll come over and fill him up with buckshot."

That made me laugh.

"It's no joke," he said quickly, "I'm miserable over—your going off—and when I think that some one else may *make* you like him—oh, the dickens of a lot—well, then I can't—I simply can't *see straight*—"

"I won't look at anybody," I promised, "until you come—"

It seemed to please him. In fact it seemed to please him so much that I had to remind him that we were in a street car and that people might think it strange to see him kiss my hand—for he did that—but he said he didn't give two hundred darns what they thought, and he asked me again if I meant it, and I knew I did, and I said I did; and he said, "Well, then, what's two years?" and he slipped a funny, old hand-made ring with a garnet setting, that he had always worn, over my finger, and I let it stay there.

Then we reached Fiesole, and the woman who

carried a baby, called her five children and the poodle dog, and they got off and the other passengers, all in Sunday dress, followed, and then Sam and I.

Miss Sheila met us at the head of the long, broad, cool, shady steps.

"Hello, Sam," she said in her dear way, "I'm glad to see you—"

He bowed, and she said suddenly, "You *are* a nice boy," and, after he smiled and flushed and thanked her, she added, "I was afraid you weren't nice *enough*—"

And then I felt myself grow pink.

"Children," she said, after that, "I want you to come in and wait until I get on my hat, and then walk with me. Will you, or have you been walking and are you tired?"

I said we weren't and that it would be fine, and Sam echoed it and Miss Sheila put in a quick, "Good!" and turned and hurried toward the building.

"Isn't she beautiful, and lovely?" said Sam.

"*Isn't* she?" I answered.

"By jings," he went on, "I wish Mr. Wake would come meet her. . . . Why won't he? He got all rattled the other day when Leslie asked him to call on Miss Sheila with her—said he couldn't talk to women, all that sort of rot, and you know he's always simply tip-top—wonder—"

"Look here, Sam," I said, "I can't tell you, but—"

And then Miss Sheila came back and put an end to my explaining nothing to Sam, and at the same time asking him not to press the matter of Mr. Wake's meeting Miss Sheila.

She looked as pretty as I had ever seen her look. She had on a lavender voile dress that had frilly collars and cuffs on it and a broad low sash, and she had on her head a drooping hat of the most delicate pink shade with bunches of lilacs trailing from it, and the combination was beautiful.

"Ready," she said with a smile, "and whither?"

I suggested going up to the Roman theater and baths, but Sam, who was that afternoon so light hearted that he was almost silly, said he'd had a bath only about two hours before, and Miss Sheila said she'd had one only a few minutes before, and that she preferred walking down hill.

"But you'll have to walk back," I said, for I didn't want to get *near* Mr. Wake's house!

"Not until the sun's lower," said Sam.

"And then we could ride," said Miss Sheila.

"Exactly Mr. Wake's spirit," said Sam. "She ought to know him, now oughtn't she, Jane?"

I could do nothing with him. He acted just

exactly as Daddy does when we have guests and Mother tries to head him off with a little kick under the table. He always looks at her, and says, "Did you kick me, my dear? Forgotten to serve some one, or something? Let me see!" which makes it all the worse, because almost always at that point, he is serving everything in the dish to one person, or telling a story he tells about a quick remarriage—to the guest who is remarried. I imagine most men are like that.

Anyway, Sam talked—no, he did what Leslie would have called "raved" about Mr. Wake, and Miss Sheila listened and questioned and wanted more.

"His books," she said, "are delightful. . . . Little phrases in them make me think of some one I knew years ago. . . . And his kindness to Jane has made me like him, too. Did you say his place is out this way?"

"I did," Sam answered, "and mighty good luck it is, too," he added, "for it's going to pour—come on—"

"We're quite as near the convent," I put in, in a manner that must have been agonized.

"But that's up hill—" said Miss Sheila, and then she and Sam began to hurry so fast that it was all I could do to keep up with them, and I hadn't a chance to say a word.

"Sam," I gasped as we neared Mr. Wake's wall, and big, far-apart drops of rain began to fall, "*Sam!*"

"What's up?" he asked.

"Oh, everything!" I answered, "and you're just acting like a *fool,* Sam—we *can't* go in!"

But Miss Sheila had pulled the bell cord that hung outside of the gate, and before it was opened the rain came down in such torrents that we were drenched.

"Mr. Wake's in town," said Sam to me, in an aside.

"Why didn't you *say* so?" I snapped.

And then the gate opened.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

MISCHIEVOUS CUPID

THE gate was opened by Mr. Wake—who had just come *back* from town—and was as wet as we were.

I felt my heart stop a beat and then treble its pace, and I swallowed hard although there was no real necessity for it. And as for saying a word! I couldn't have gotten out a "Boo" so that any one would have understood it!

"Hello," said Sam, after he had sent a petitioning look at me, that asked me as plainly as day, to introduce them, "Hello! Glad you're here! . . . Miss Parrish, may I present to you our patron saint, Mr. Wake?"

Then I think Sam began to see that something unusual was up, for they stood looking at each other—those two he'd wanted to have meet—and they didn't say a word. It was a queer moment which seemed very long, that moment when we all stood in the hard driving, swirling rain, *waiting.*

Miss Sheila broke it, and she did it by holding out her hand, and saying, "Well, Terry?" and there was a funny little twisted smile on her pretty

lips and the smile didn't seem miles away from tears.

And then Mr. Wake put his hand out, in an uncertain, groping sort of way, and then he said, "*Sheila!*" And I don't think he knew he said it, but she did, for the color came flooding back into her cheeks that had been pale, and tears stood in her eyes.

There wasn't very much to *tell* about in that moment; you can't *tell* about a sunset very well. You can say that the clouds were pink and gold, and that the sky was full of silver streaks, and a misty purple haze, but you can't make the other person see it. You don't usually do anything but bore him, and when you try to describe the thing that was so beautiful, the listener usually says, "I love the outdoors. Nature for me every time! Hear about the way Babe Ruth batted 'em out Thursday in Brooklyn?" or something like that which shows you that you have utterly failed to get your description across the plate. And because of that I hesitate to try to make others see what I saw in Mr. Wake's garden that stormy day. I can only *report* the pink and the gold, and the misty purple and the silver streaks, and do that badly. But oh, they were so very, very beautiful!

When Mr. Wake spoke he said, "You—haven't changed—" and he did it between two gulps and after a deep breath.

Miss Sheila, who covered her feelings more easily than Mr. Wake, said "Nonsense, I have gray hair, and wrinkles—"

"No—" Mr. Wake shook his head. "No—" he said again.

She smiled at him, and her lips quivered.

"You," she said, "can still say pretty things, can't you?"

"To you, Sheila," he answered, and then I thought that Sam and I ought to move on. I said so in an aside to Sam, who was acting as if he were sitting in an aisle seat and twisting his program into funny shapes while he waited—in great suspense—for the hero to get the girl just before the drop of the last curtain. I think men are much too natural at times, and that was one of them.

After I had touched Sam's arm, and frowned at him, and said, "*Come on,*" in a sibilant whisper, we went up to the house, and into the big, living hall and stood there to drain.

"Gosh," said Sam, after I had taken off my hat and was wiping poppy stains from my face—my hat was ruined; the colors of my cheap flowers had run from the rain. . . . "Gosh, wasn't that simply *great!* My gosh, did *you see his face?*"

"Naturally," I said, because I was so worked up and excited that it made me feel snappish.

"Well, you needn't be cutting," said Sam as he tiptoed over to a window from which he could

see Miss Sheila and Mr. Wake, who were about a block away down by the garden gate. "My soul," he commented, after he had looked out, "I'll say that's quick work! Didn't know he had it in him—*great hat!*"

"You shouldn't spy on them, it isn't fair," I stated as I joined him. But we did look for a moment more, at those two people who stood outdoors, under the savage assaults of that raging storm, but who felt—I'm certain—as if they were favored by the happiest skies of a clear June day.

"Come on, Sam," I ordered and turned.

"Gosh ding it," he asked as he followed me ("Gosh ding it" is his most intense expression), "wasn't it *wonderful?*"

"Um hum—" I murmured.

"Are you soaked, dear?"

"A little damp," I admitted.

"I'll get Maria to make us some tea," said Sam, "and I'll take you up to Mr. Wake's room, and you can shed that once-perky, now depressed frock and put on one of his dressing gowns. And then come down, and we'll toast you up before the fire I make while you change—"

"All right," I agreed.

"This way, dear—" he said then, and I went with him up a twisting stairs that had a wrought iron balustrade, over which was growing a vine

that had its feet in a brick colored jardiniere. . . . It was a very, very pretty house, and more than that. It was built for comfort too. There were soft, deep low chairs all around, and ash trays on tiny tables, and magazines, and books—hundreds of books in every room—I kept thinking of how Miss Sheila would like it.

After I had taken off my dress, and hung it over the only chair in the room that wouldn't be hurt by moisture, I put on the dark green dressing gown that Sam had laid out for me, and went down stairs again—holding the robe up around me, for of course it was miles long for me, and it made me go carefully for fear I would trip.

Sam had two chairs before the big fireplace, and in this a few sticks were burning. When he saw me, he laughed, and I laughed too, and then we settled. Maria came in with a tray that had on it an orange china tea set, that looked very pretty on that dull, gray day, and there were yellow flowers tucked into each napkin, and she had orange cake, and mayonnaise and egg sandwiches to eat with our tea, and so the color scheme was quite perfect.

After I had eaten three sandwiches and was about to begin on another—I wasn't very hungry, it hadn't been long since lunch—I spoke. "Sam," I said, "don't you think some one ought to tell them it's raining?"

"Not by a good deal!" he answered, as he poured himself some fresh tea. "They'll get on to it sometime, all by themselves—"

"Miss Sheila's been sick," I added. I was a little bit worried, but Sam answered that he thought the soaking wouldn't hurt her, and it didn't, and he added the statement that he didn't *believe* Mr. Wake would be grateful for any interruption just then.

Then we were quiet a minute as we watched the spluttery little fire leap and die down, and then leap all over again. I twisted my new ring as I sat there, for it seemed strange—as well as nice—to wear it.

"Think," I said, I was referring to Miss Sheila and Mr. Wake—"how long it can last—"

Sam moved his chair closer.

"Yes—" he said, in an undertone, "think of it—"

Then one of the long, French windows opened, and the wettest person I have ever seen came in, and she was followed by another one.

"Tea," said Miss Sheila, "how very nice—" and her voice shook on every single word.

And then Mr. Wake said, "Ah, yes, tea!" just as if he had recently discovered the plant and the use for it.

"Have some," I said, "and Miss Sheila, you'd better go put on one of Mr. Wake's dressing

gowns; he has a lavender one that would be beautiful on you—"

"What wouldn't?" asked Mr. Wake.

"If you think she's pretty *now,*" I said, "You just wait until she has dried off!"

"Dear, foolish child," murmured Miss Sheila as she took off her entirely limp hat and ran her fingers through her hair which was kinking up in funny little curls all over her head.

Then she sat down on a lounge that stood to one side of the fire, and Mr. Wake sat down by her, and kept looking at her, and looking at her, and looking at her.

"Children," said Miss Sheila, "I have a long story for you. . . . Once upon a time there were two foolish young people who were proud and stubborn, and who trusted the mails of Uncle Sam. . . . And they quarreled badly; and the man wrote but the young lady never got the letter, and the young lady—after long months that were filled with chastening and pride-shattering heartbreak—wrote the young man, but, ah, me, he had changed his name—"

"Just as you are going to change yours," said Mr. Wake, and Miss Sheila laughed and nodded.

"And so," said Miss Sheila, "the fates kept them apart, and her hair turned gray—"

"And he grew a tummy," I put in, and Miss Sheila laughed again.

"And they were both lonely," said Mr. Wake, "so miserably lonely; you *were,* Sheila?"

And she said, "Oh, Terry, I—" and then she remembered Sam and me, and stopped.

"Well?" I questioned.

"Well," said Miss Sheila, "one fine day the lonely lady who had once been a happy girl grew so very lonely that she could not stand still, and so she met two nice children at a convent gate, and she said, 'Let's walk—' and they looked at each other and smiled—and the way they smiled made her more lonely than ever—and they said 'Yes,' and so they all started down a hill—"

"And then," said Mr. Wake, "an old chap who had been down to Florence, and had gotten his favorite gray suit so wet that he didn't think that it would ever come back to shape, heard the tinkle of the bell of his gate and said, 'The devil,' because he was half way up to the house and everything had tried him that day anyway. But he turned back, and he opened the gate, and he found—heaven!"

Then I *knew* that Sam and I should move!

"Sam," I said, "may I see the picture that you're working on now?"

"Yes," Sam answered, and we stood up.

It made us both very happy to leave those two dear people whom we loved so well, and who had been lonely, there together.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

HOMEWARD BOUND!

THE end of May! And all over again I felt the excitement that comes with a journey, for I was started for Genoa on the twenty-fifth with Miss Meek to see that I got aboard the White Star ship safely, and Sam to see that Miss Meek and I weren't bored.

Miss Bannister had gone to England, and Leslie had gone to join her Mother in Paris where they were to buy a trousseau that would be worn on a ranch for the benefit of one man and a one-eyed Chinese cook who could spit eight feet! And Viola had started out with her Madame Heilbig, who had suddenly decided to tour Switzerland and some of the Italian cities that are popular in summer—the lake and seashore points. *Mr. and Mrs. Wake* had started out in a smart tan motor one morning, after a little wedding in the American Church—and we didn't know where they were, and Mr. Hemmingway had taken up residence in Mr. Wake's villa.

In spite of the scattering, however, I had a few people to see me off, and to wish me everything good.

Miss Julianna, who cried, stood by me in the station saying that she knew that God and the Virgin would see that I was happy because I should be, which I thought *so* kind; and Mr. Hemmingway, who had come all the way to town, stood near with a bouquet that he had picked for me, trying *so* hard to remember when he had first seen Genoa—but he *couldn't* fasten it. Miss Meek, who was to join her Italian family in June, stood close with Sam saying, "My eye, how I'll miss the jolly flapper!" And altogether it was warming, but it made my throat lump too, the way that things that are too warming sometimes do.

Then the horn sounded, and every one said good-by to me, and I kissed them all, including Mr. Hemmingway, who wiped his eyes and blew his nose as he said good-by. Then Miss Meek, and Sam and I followed our facchino down the platform and went through the gates that took us to our train. We got a compartment that was rather crowded because it had one Englishman in it, and they travel with enough scenery for an Uncle Tom's Cabin Company; but, after he had moved his portable bath and his camp stool and his tea basket, there was enough room for us, and we all settled and began to have a very nice time.

My heart ached as we went out of Florence, and I couldn't look back. I loved it so.

"You'll be coming back on the run one of these

fine days,'' said Miss Meek, who seemed to feel all I felt.

''I *hope* so,'' I said.

''And how could you help it, with your friends up the Fiesole way? Mr. Wake told me that you were going to visit them out there within a year or so. Told me so when he arranged for me to take you to Genoa and put you on the boat, don't you know—''

''Well, that's awfully nice,'' I said, and Sam said he thought so too.

Then—the flying landscape.

White oxen dragging creaking carts. . . . Little clusters of houses in pastel tones. . . . White roads that circled terraced hills and groves of olive trees.

''Of course,'' I said, ''I want to see my people—'' and I did want to, so much that my eyes filled as I thought of it.

''Of course,'' said Miss Meek.

''But it is hard to leave friends, isn't it?'' I added.

And Miss Meek nodded. Sam put his hand over mine then, and then Miss Meek seemed to drowse.

The journey was very short. I cannot remember a shorter seeming one, though it does take over five hours. Baedecker says ''The view of the Mediterranean beyond Pisa is sadly marred by

the frequent tunnels." There are over ninety of them; Sam helped me count them. Before I knew it we had had our lunch and had settled back again, and then we were in the city that is proud of Columbus, whose statue stands in one of the public squares on the hillsides, and is surrounded with tall, spikey, sharp palm trees.

Out in the bay my ship was moored, and I was to go on it that night so that Miss Meek and Sam might go back to Florence. I didn't want to. I had to think of mother very hard to keep from crying. It is really complicated to love several countries and many friends, for it makes so much tugging and not a little hurt.

I said that just before I said good-by.

Then Sam, who had been coughing quite a little, and always before he spoke, asked me if I had my tickets, and I said—for the fortieth time anyway—that I had, and Miss Meek said, "Look at the birds circling around the ship. Jolly, what?"

"They follow it," I said.

"A lot will follow that ship," said Sam.

And then Miss Meek kissed me, and Sam said, "Look here, dear, if you can kiss Mr. Hemmingway, I guess you might take a chance on me?"

And I said I guessed so, and I kissed him. And Miss Meek wiped her eyes, and kept saying, "No end jolly, a sea trip, don't you know?"

And I said, "Yes," and I kept my hand in

Sam's, and Sam didn't say anything. But he did *look* quite a lot of things.

And then somehow, I was on board, and alone, and at last in my stateroom which I was to share with an American woman from Florence who was going home to visit her mother.

It was honestly a relief to have the good-bys over. And after I took off my hat and coat, and had hung up the things from my suitcase in a half of the small cupboard, I got out the book that the choir had given me before I left. It is a very nice book made of puffy leather, and it has "My Trip Abroad" written across it in gold letters, and of course I had written in it, because that was what was expected.

I opened it and read:

"The Madonna of the Chair is in the Pitti Gallery, and it is by Raphael. The Gallery is very big. It took Sam and me four hours to go through it."

Below this:

"Sam and I walked to-day, up near Fiesole, and we saw the Villa Medici where the Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles visited Lady Sybil Scott, at the end of their honeymoon. It is a lovely place. It seems to be so nice that they could be there."

Then—over the page—I found a note about the Riccardi Palace.

"There is a picture in the chapel of the Riccardi Palace," I had written, "that was painted by candle light by a man named Gozzoli, who has been dead for several years. It is a fine picture and has lots of gold in it and the portraits of the Medicis who lived in the palace. Sam and I went down near the Arno and bought buns after seeing it, which was very inspiring."

On the next page I had an item about the twins, who were better, and a note about the tombs of the Medicis and a new tie I had helped Sam to buy. I was very glad I kept that record. I knew that it would be helpful. After I had looked at it until I saw all Florence through it, and Florence was beginning to blur and wiggle because of something that crept from my heart up into my eyes, I went up on deck and looked off toward Genoa which lay, in a tangle of many gentle colors, against the hill. . . . And I took a long, long look at this bit of Italy—the Italy I loved so very much.

I knew that somewhere that day, my Miss Sheila—I still called her that—and Mr. Wake were touring along through pretty country; together, after the long years apart.

And I knew that Leslie, and Viola, and Miss Bannister and Miss Meek, and Mr. Hemmingway were happy.

And I knew that Sam was miserable. And it sounds strange to say, but that helped me as much as anything.

Then I looked at the birds that were flying in

wide arcs around the ship, the birds that followed it. . . . And I knew that Sam was right in saying that other things would go along with me. . . . And I needed them, although I needed, more than anything just then, my Mother. . . . And I needed her because of Sam Deane, which I can't explain.

I fumbled in my pocket, and I found her letter, and a little piece of paper that had been torn from the edge of a newspaper, on which Sam had written.

"Dear, dear Jane Jones," and then, all in a hurried tangle, "I love you!" (Sam had written this while Miss Meek dozed and an Italian officer who was smoking outside in the corridor, looked in at us)

For a fraction of a second I felt more miserable than I ever had before, and then a warm breeze sprung up and it seemed to fan a warm, let down, easy feeling into me. And after that I looked down in the water, and in it I saw the front door of our house, and the porch which slants toward the steps, and my own Mother in the doorway, smiling and trying not to cry and Roberta back of her. . . . And the twins jumping up and down by the gate, and shrilly screaming, "Mother, she's *here!* She's *here,* Mother!"

And then I felt myself get out of Daddy's flivver and hurry up the walk. And I saw every one hugging and kissing me, and every one crying. . . .

I saw this, before it *ever* happened, just as it really was to be!

But I didn't see the table as it was—which I knew would have on it all the things I liked best to eat—for I didn't forecast the *hothouse roses;* I never *dreamed* that Roberta would blow her allowance on these when she could have picked them *right out in the garden!* But it was all wonderful! Nor did I see the banner that the twins had made that had

WELCUM

painted on it with shoe blackening—they had each ruined a dress through this—nor did I dream that Elaine McDonald would send me an angel cake!

But everything was nicer than I could imagine it would be!

I wondered, as I thought of my people and getting home, whether any other girl was as lucky as I, and I decided that none could be. And realizing how happy I was made me feel a little sad; humble, and uncomfortably grateful, so I forgot it as soon as I could and tried to feel natural.

And Sam's smile—which I was to see a whole lot and which seemed to belong with the things I loved—and my people, helped me to do this.

THE END

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